DETROIT

By
Mark Boal

Foreword by Mark Boal

In the summer of 2014, I went up to Detroit to meet a man who had been very hard to find. He was called Cleveland Larry Reed, a common enough name, but it had taken a researcher several months to dig up a working telephone number. I left a few messages. When I finally got him on the phone, he wasn't sure he wanted to see me, let alone talk about what happened to him almost 50 years before.

I promised that I wouldn't waste his time, and he eventually let me into his apartment. It looked like Larry, in his mid-60s, hadn't been out in a couple of days, maybe longer. Living alone, not too steady on his feet, he'd fallen a long way from the glamour and ease of his youth, of electrified nights singing and dancing for the fancy crowds at the Fox Theater downtown.

In 1967, Larry was 18 years old and the co-founder of a Motown group called The Dramatics. They were a bunch of friends who had honed their playground songs into a major-league act, touring the country, opening for Aretha Franklin, the Supremes, all the huge Detroit stars. Larry was deeply committed to his music and didn't court trouble with anybody, much less the police. But one summer night, at the Algiers Motel in Detroit's Virginia Park section, he had an encounter with law enforcement that left him permanently wounded—mentally and artistically.

What brought Larry down wasn't a flaw in his character, or a bad decision he made in the heat of a moment, it was shitty luck and racism. At the height of the Detroit riots, when The Dramatics fled from a canceled gig and were trying to find a safe place, Ron Banks, the group's other co-founder, managed to make it home, and would lead The Dramatics to *Billboard* hits in the years to come. By a twist of fate, Larry and some of the others tumbled into the Algiers Motel, where they crossed paths with a police squad that judged them by the color of their skin. The result was a night of terror from which Larry never recovered. Turn left, go home. Turn right, grab a hotel room. What separated success from failure for young black men in the late 1960s was so thin, it was almost impossible to delineate in the moment.

On that muggy summer afternoon in 2014, after spending several hours with Larry, I found a lot to respect and admire. He had, despite everything, persevered in his determination to live as an artist. He now sung for various church choirs. I left his apartment feeling deeply compelled by his story and grieving for the potential that had been robbed from him.

The sort of interaction I had with Larry was unique, as all people are unique, but not entirely new to me. As a reporter and the writer of three scripts set in the real world, I often find true events and real people as my spark and inspiration. When I started *Detroit*, I thought of it as Larry's story—one man who has his voice stolen from him. But as I learned about what happened at the Algiers Motel, and more broadly about what had been going on in the city of Detroit, the cast of characters grew. The five-day rebellion that will forever mark Detroit's history started as a chain reaction, moving from person to person, group to group, until it engulfed 200 city blocks of a dense urban area. I followed the story outward from Larry's own, interviewing firsthand as many participants and witnesses as I could, while bringing other characters to life from newspaper archives, police reports, federal lawsuits, and other contemporaneous accounts. It was a daunting task. You could take almost any person alive in Detroit in 1967 and they'd have a story to tell. At some point, the screenwriter in me has to tell the journalist to put his notebook down.

Larry's story ended up sharing space with that of Melvin Dismukes, played so poignantly by John Boyega,

as an African-American security guard stuck on both sides of the racial divide, and the sociopathic racist patrolman, Krauss, a character inspired by the actions and recorded deeds of a Detroit policeman.

Detroit in 1967 was a highly segregated city, its racial boundaries enforced by the police. Young black men, in particular, were subject to routine assaults and humiliations as a means of keeping them in their place, and it was the accumulated anger and frustration from these encounters that exploded during a routine raid of an after-hours club on a hot July night. I thought it was important to show how even small interactions could be loaded with hostile, dehumanizing intent, like a cop grabbing the backside of a young black woman as she's being herded into a van. I drew inspiration from the disturbing trove of news photos, like a famous one of police in riot gear advancing down the street on a "gang" of elegantly dressed grandmothers. Images like that revealed how fear had erased all semblance of civil society.

During the writing of the screenplay, in the summer of 2015, the story and characters took shape in a haunted mood of danger and sudden death, and I found myself working in horror-genre veins, except that in this case, the supernatural element was replaced with the all-too-real terror of racism. At the same time, the emerging narrative had elements of a crime saga, set against the backdrop of a city on fire. Although, in another twist on convention, the perps are the police in this crime tale.

By the time the draft was completed, and passed on to my frequent collaborator, director Kathryn Bigelow, I'd written something quite unlike the singular focus and sole protagonists of *The Hurt Locker* and *Zero Dark Thirty*. The effort to make *Detroit* a mirror of the chaotic times led to an ensemble piece, quickly shifting between characters in a nesting doll of movies within movies, a riot film that gives way to racial horror-crime that switches to a courtroom drama, with several detours along the way into a band's journey, the miseducation of rookie cops, and the adventures of a pair of young women experimenting with sexual freedom. It was, in short, a lot of ground to cover in a single picture. But Kathryn was encouraging, and over the proceeding drafts, we honed the themes and scope, while attempting to keep alive the spirit of a tough and untamed narrative.

The underlying intention, however, was always pretty straightforward: We wanted viewers not so much to watch the story as absorb it like a physical sensation. The script is itself like a volatile crowd, unpredictable and densely populated. The dialogue was a constantly looming creative challenge. It couldn't live in the past—it had to strike a middle ground between period authenticity and contemporary relatability. Most of all, the character arcs themselves had to bend to the reality of what the theorists call racial power structures. To me, that meant letting go of the screenwriter's trusty toolbox and instead of using character to guide the plot—i.e., that character determines fate—embracing a plot in which social forces triumph, continuously and tragically, over individual will.

A word about research and real events: The foundation of the story, rooted as it is in an historical incident, was provided by an ample historical record, documents, police files, and a research team I commissioned, led by veteran investigative journalist David Zeman, who guided a Pulitzer Prize-winning series for the *Detroit Free Press*, among many other career highlights. The great journalist John Hersey wrote a book called *The Algiers Motel Incident*, which was published in 1968, before the dust had settled. Wherever possible, I took scenes and dialogue directly from contemporaneous accounts, like a newspaper story of a grieving mother on courthouse steps addressing the acquittal of the men charged with killing her son. There is, of course, a lot that is unknown or disputed, and in those cases, I employed poetic license, under a self-imposed rule to never stray from what I understood to be the underlying truth of a scene or an event.

This script is built on a sturdy base of journalism and history, but it is not the same as journalism or history, nor does it aspire to be. As a screenwriter, I take the responsibility of being the creator of a tale, of transforming these raw materials into a drama.

I chose this story from the '60s in part because the decade evokes such lively and contradictory associations. The summer of 1967 witnessed two of the worst civil disturbances in American history—first Newark, then Detroit. It is troubling even now to watch the news coverage of all that violence and destruction, but make no mistake about it—this was an uprising, a rebellion. This was black America lashing out against an entrenched culture of repression and bigotry. And yet the far more widely remembered (and celebrated) spectacle of rebellion from that same moment in time is of the Summer of Love, all those hippies, mostly white, joyfully grooving out in San Francisco. By now, the love-potion stuff has run its course, diffused into little more than an advertising trope, but the events in Detroit are hard evidence of a cultural crisis that remains unresolved, of two Americas that still don't know quite how to deal with each other.

When *Detroit* came out this summer, we had just witnessed the resurgence of white-supremacist agitation in Charlottesville. Sensing an opportunity for the movie to be part of the political conversation, I flew to Washington, D.C., to try and get President Trump to see it. On NBC's *Meet the Press*, I issued my invitation. Chuck Todd asked me if I'd screen the movie for the White House. Yes, I said. "Trump should see it. Maybe he'll learn something."

The administration never called. Maybe Trump wasn't in the mood for a serious movie. I can't really blame him there. It wasn't exactly summer blockbuster material. In any case, I never got my tweet.

A couple of months later, in the fall, I got a clearer understanding of why. After a large group of NFL players decided to kneel during the National Anthem as a protest against police brutality, a Reuters poll found that 63 percent of whites disapproved of the players for this, compared to 17 percent of blacks. The president had no trouble picking a side, aligning himself with the solid majority of white people who remain suspicious, if not outright contemptuous, of attempts by African-Americans to organize and agitate for change. In this respect, we might as well be back in 1967.

In even the best of times, which surely these are not, *Detroit* would have to do a lot of fancy footwork to get past the natural resistance most viewers have to upsetting material. At the risk of stating the obvious, sensations of discomfort in movies are generally viewed much more skeptically than feelings of delight. For this reason, I originally tried to conceive it as a "true crime" story. We all know how that works. We are shown certain facts, then get to play detective, prosecutor, defense attorney, judge, and jury: Gather evidence, construct cases, debate motives and render our own verdicts. The horrors of the criminal act itself are sterilized into hamster pellets for our hungry minds. It's a very addictive pastime.

But ultimately, there was no way to imbue the crimes at the center of *Detroit* with those kinds of genre pleasures. Three young men are murdered and there is no compensating turn in the narrative, and there never will be. Instead, under Bigelow's bravely blunt direction, the tragedy is shown unadorned. Nothing softens the blows. Unusually for a contemporary motion picture, the film asks the viewer to experience the same loss of dignity as the real-life victims. And depending on your own politics and tolerances, that's either asking way too much, or it's an act of empathy with moral implications, perhaps long overdue.

Mark Boal
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OVER BLACK:

A tired voice:

OFFICER JIM (O.S.)
(radio)
Alright Frank. Proceed.

FADE IN - DETROIT - NIGHT - SUMMER OF '67

Concrete and shadow. Cars moving. People slip in and out of view.

Above, street lamps burn. But there is still more darkness than light.

Find JIM with his radio leaning against a building. You can just tell from his sunken posture that the guy is bored, bored of his job, bored of being a white undercover vice cop in this African American neighborhood.

OFFICER JIM
(into radio)
Frank?

Finally:

OFFICER FRANK (O.S.)
(over radio)
Yeah

OFFICER JIM
(into radio)
Jesus Christ, proceed.

OFFICER FRANK (O.S.)
(over radio)
Okay.

Jim grabs a cigarette, peels off a match, off the flame -

AROUND THE CORNER:

FRANK, an African American vice cop who is also in plain clothes, plus two white UNIFORMED COPS, hustle through the neighborhood -- passing RESIDENTS out on their front stoops. Hostile looks between police and residents.

INT. AFTER HOURS DRINKING CLUB - AKA BLIND PIG - STAIRCASE

POLICE running up a flight of stairs, towards the SOUNDS of a party.

TOP OF STAIRCASE

An entry door guarded by a heavy-set BOUNCER in a tuxedo. He ignores Frank and the other cops, folds his thick arms.

BOUNCER
Private party.

OFFICER FRANK
Pick another card.

The bouncer shrugs. Frank tries the door. Locked.

OFFICER FRANK (CONT'D)
I see what you mean.

He drives with his shoulder, splintering the mortise, and the officers barge in and find -

INT. AFTER HOURS DRINKING CLUB - MAIN ROOM

Casual joint with a relaxed vibe, couches and card tables, booze, dice, well-dressed patrons, all African American.

OFFICER FRANK
(shouting)
Party's over folks!

Complaints and protests from the crowd. One of the louder COMPLAINERS catches Frank's eye.

OFFICER FRANK (CONT'D)
Get moving.

COMPLAINER
Or what, pig?

-- QUICKLY, Frank throws a choke hold and drags him into a back office

OFFICE:

The moment Frank closes the door, both men relax.

COMPLAINER/UNDERCOVER COP
The owner split, Frank, I'm sorry that fell through.

Frank sighs.

UNDERCOVER COP
(a suggestion)
But you got outstanding warrants among that crowd. Check the women too. You lazy.

Frank grabs a lamp off the desk.

FRANK
Cover your eyes -

Frank smashes the lamp on the table, a terrific noise --

BAR:

Patrons react to the crashing noise -- *somebody getting their ass kicked.*

EXT. AFTER HOURS DRINKING CLUB - REAR - EXIT DOOR

Jim and another OFFICER are attempting to snap a padlock and chain securing a fire exit.

OFFICER JIM
(straining with the crow bar)
Fuck me.

OFFICER
I'll get a blow torch from the station.

OFFICER JIM
No that's an hour trip. We'll use the front door.

OFFICER
Take 'em out in public?

INT./EXT. AFTER HOURS DRINKING CLUB - 12TH STREET AND CLAIRMOUNT

Blur of nice clothes and faces, young and old moving quickly by, as the crowd of black REVELERS hurries down a staircase under the watchful eye of a WHITE COP wielding a baton.

POLICE OFFICER
Outside, everyone.

TITLE OVER: **DETROIT. JULY 23, 1967**

As they hit the street, we see that among the crowd are two VIETNAM VETERANS still in uniforms adorned with combat medals.

PARTY GOER
Welcome home.

VETERAN
Yes sir.

His war buddy looks out at the familiar scene: flashing police lights, gathering CROWD of onlookers. *Some things never change.*

EXT. 12TH STREET AND CLAIRMOUNT - CONTINUOUS

Up the street, revelers are pushed into paddy wagons as Frank and Jim confer about the change of plans.

OFFICER JIM
We had to use the front door. Make a public display.

OFFICER FRANK
I almost feel bad.

A well heeled BLACK PATRON, could be a lawyer or a banker, approaches the cops.

PATRON
Gentleman, a word?

They nod.

PATRON (CONT'D)
We're celebrating our military veterans back from the jungle.

OFFICER JIM
If you don't have any warrants, you will be home in a few hours.

PATRON
Arrests for a private gathering, that's police overreach, see --

Jim rubs his eyes.

OFFICER JIM
Sir, I'm tired and I'm about to knock your fucking teeth out. You got no liquor license on this place.

UP THE BLOCK:

Meanwhile, as she's maneuvered by a police officer, a YOUNG DANCER gets groped - maybe on purpose, maybe by accident -

WOMAN
Hey!

-- Her HUSBAND clocks this in a quiet rage -

It's clear now that the police have a problem because there are far too many revelers for the available transportation. And to make matters worse, the CROWD gathering to watch the public display is increasingly restless, taunting friends, mocking cops.

One of the guys in the crowd, a teenager named LEON in a stylish paisley shirt, calls out to one of the party goers -

LEON
Hey Dave! Dave!
(Dave, filing into the wagon shoots him a look)
I told you you was going to get busted!

Leon laughs at Dave.

LEON (CONT'D)
(calling after Dave)
Alcoholic!

As Leon grins at the scene, someone throws a bottle from across the street. It crashes against a brick wall.

LEON likes the noise.

It gives him an idea.

TITLE OVER: **3:50 AM**

As doors slam and the police cars pull out, the scene slips into chaos: another bottle is thrown, then another - crashing against the wall, then breaking the rear window of a police cruiser.

The POLICE hurry, panicked.

With slamming doors, they leave the neighborhood.

EXT. 12TH STREET AND CLAIRMOUNT - CONTINUOUS

A KID in the crowd of spectators pokes at the splintered glass of a store front. Just a little push. It breaks.

An older KID smashes the rest, climbs into the store, opens the front door to the eager crowd. Christmas coming early.

INT. FURNITURE STORE - CONTINUOUS

A GUY attempts to carry a comically large couch out on his back. Revelers cheer him on.

CUT TO:

EXT. DETROIT - 12TH AND CLAIRMOUNT - AN HOUR LATER

TITLE OVER: **4:50 AM**

Now a symbolic police presence here and a PATROLMAN is walking down the street through what has become a very large CROWD (predominantly black but some whites). The cop makes no attempt to arrest anyone. He merely observes the vibe of festive anarchy, an edgy carnival that could go either way.

Gleeful faces. Petty theft, grabbing items off shelves.

And then someone somewhere, we don't know who or why, escalates...

INT. BASEMENT

Fingers on a Zippo.

Lighter fluid poured on a wooden shelf loaded with bottles.

The bottles burst into flame.

INTERCUT:

Historical footage of the early moments of the Detroit unrest.

CUT TO:

BLACK BOOTS ON THE STREET.

Come up to see ten young white men in uniform, DETROIT CITY COPS, holding a tense line, armed with shotguns, as a handful of FIRES blaze from nearby dwellings.

TITLE OVER: **JULY 23, 1967 7:00 AM**

ON OTHER SIDE OF THE STREET:

A strange juxtaposition of contradictory scenes: about twenty-five PEOPLE are jeering at the cops in the line, clamoring for justice, protesting, while elsewhere on the street life continues in a normal way, and passersby en route to work ignore both the protesters and the police.

One of these workers, a black kid in his late teens, approaches the line of cops. This is FRED TEMPLE.

FRED TEMPLE
Officer, you gonna make some arrests?

COP
We were told to let it play out. It will die down.

FRED TEMPLE
Can I get through? I got work.
(MORE)

FRED TEMPLE (CONT'D)
(off the cop's skepticism)
Ford Assembly.

COP
You a janitor?

Fred decides to keep it simple.

FRED TEMPLE
Yes, sir.

The cop jerks his head, 'Go on', and Fred slips past just as -

SHOTS RING OUT!

Everyone scatters -

INT. FORD ASSEMBLY LINE - LATER

Fred, wearing a face shield, crouches inside a steel car frame, passing a blow torch over the seams. Turns out, he's a welder.

One of a few black males in the place.

INTERCUT:

Historical footage of the Ford plant until we sense the complex orchestration and sheer scale of the enterprise.

CUT TO:

EXT. DETROIT - 12TH AND CLAIRMOUNT - LATER

CONGRESSMAN JOHN CONYERS and his brother NATE CONYERS, stand on the roof of a car, trying to calm another CROWD.

REP. JOHN CONYERS
(into bullhorn)
Just settle down now!

From the crowd -

YOUNG BLACK KID
Settle yourself!

REP. JOHN CONYERS
(into bullhorn)
I look blind to you? I know you're angry!

For a moment, it looks like Conyers might control the crowd.

REP. JOHN CONYERS (CONT'D)
We got a lotta problems in this city, especially with the police. That's changing.

ANOTHER KID
Man, bring Stokley Carmichael down here! We don't want to hear from your ass.

REP. JOHN CONYERS
Messing up your own damn neighborhood is not going to solve anything. We need to pull together now!

ANOTHER KID 2
(shouting)
Burn it down!

A bottle smashes at their feet. The politicians look for a way out.

NATE CONYERS
Come on, John!

CUT TO:

EXT. DETROIT STREETS - ELSEWHERE

Find a nice CONVERTIBLE GTO with the top down. Inside, a MOM, young, white and her preteen SON are ogling the spectacle of the riots unfolding on the street. They see a WOMAN running out of an appliance store with a TV on her shoulder.

SON
Can I - can I - please Mom get one?

Mom grins why not. Her son dashes out -

MOM
Get an RCA honey!

Off her excitement -

CUT TO:

EXT. A DETROIT STREET - LATER

Fire trucks arrive, sirens wailing, and FIREMEN unfurl a hose from a brass reel.

Water sprays into the flames of a burning grocery store.

DOWN THE BLOCK:

A pack of delinquent KIDS muster the courage to throw some rocks at the firemen.

FIREMEN:

Rocks inbound. They scan the block. The kids are gone.

Then another fireman gets dinged with a pebble. Not a dangerous blow. A provocation.

The CAPTAIN blows a whistle to retreat.

Off the hose winding backwards into the brass reel.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMP GRAYLING - PERIMETER FENCE - 5 PM

Big motors roar to life.

National Guard caravans depart their training facility, in long lines of TRUCKS, TROOP CARRIERS, and TANKS.

T.V. NEWS ANCHOR PRE-LAP
Five thirty in the evening: Detroit Central High School. Where this morning children played, the National Guard has established temporary headquarters.

The VEHICLES turn a corner, headed towards the area around 12th Street.

EXT. DETROIT NEIGHBORHOOD - MOMENTS LATER

Troops on foot patrol, just a sloppy unimpressive bunch of kids too skinny to fill their uniforms.

T.V. NEWS ANCHOR O.S.
And now on the streets of the East Side of America's industrial pride, the National Guard is on patrol.

INT./EXT. DETROIT APARTMENT - EUCLID AVENUE

A 4 year-old girl, who history records as TANYA BLANDING, is watching the riot news on a T.V.

T.V. NEWS ANCHOR
Ready to quell the rioting by force if necessary.

Tanya goes over to the window to look at the street. She parts the blinds and sees an Army tank below.

TANK POV:

The blinds catch the sunlight and shimmer in a way that could be interpreted as the metallic glint of a weapon.

TANK SPOTTER
Sniper in the window!

The tank fires a .50 caliber shot straight into the window, killing Tanya instantly.

CUT TO:

BLACK

KRAUSS PRE-LAP
Oh boy, will you look at this?

EXT. DETROIT STREETS - PRE-DAWN

Dim outlines of the city in ruins gradually become visible before our eyes.

KRAUSS PRE-LAP
It's so sad.

The RUMBLE of a '65 Packard 4-door.

EXT. DETROIT STREETS - JULY 1967

We see the PACKARD clearly now, the big American sedan rolling past buildings which are burned down to their frames, the substructures exposed.

KRAUSS PRE-LAP
It's preventable, you know? That's the worst part.

On the horizon, fires burn.

KRAUSS O.S.
Look at this!

INT/EXT. PACKARD

KRAUSS
I mean, this looks like 'Nam. You believe this is the USA!?

He's in the car with two other young COPS in street clothes. Shotguns on the dash. Machine gun visible in the back seat.

KRAUSS (CONT'D)
We're to blame. Standing by when the trouble started. Now this.

FLYNN
Uh-huh.

In the passenger seat, that's Krauss's partner, FLYNN -- an okay guy, wife and whatnot, plays shortstop on the Police Baseball team. Not the most ambitious fellow in the department.

FLYNN (CONT'D)
What can you do... crazy.

Nodding behind them is DEMENS, the third guy on the team today. He's wired up and looking for a fight.

DEMENS
Not crazy. They know exactly what they're doing! This is gonna be worse than '43.

FLYNN
Sure, sure.

KRAUSS
We gotta stop failing these people! We're letting them down left and right.

EXT./INT PACKARD - CONTINUOUS

They keep driving through the broken city.

All eyes on the street ...

- SUDDENLY

STREET

They spot a teenage LOOTER in a paisley shirt. We recognize him as Leon from the opening scene at the blind pig.

He's stepping out of a grocery store with two bags of groceries in his arms

KRAUSS
Take, for example, this mother fucker right here -

Krauss taps the brakes and **flies out of the car**. Flynn follows with Krauss while Demens stays back. LEON spots them and flees.

KRAUSS (CONT'D)
HALT!!

Krauss raises his shotgun and fires -

-- Buckshot strikes Leon *in the back.*

-- He drops one bag of groceries but keeps running, and Krauss and Flynn give chase.

EXT. ALLEY

Flynn raises a shotgun and fires. It grazes him. And again, Leon stumbles - drops the GROCERY BAG, beans and canned pineapple spill out, then keeps running down another alley.

FLYNN
Incredible!

The cops come dashing around the corner as he's climbing a fence, and they fire yet again. Blood spurts but Leon keeps in flight, going over the fence, and tumbling out of sight.

FLYNN (CONT'D)
What a fucking specimen!

Krauss struggles to climb the fence. He's no athlete.

FLYNN (CONT'D)
Forget it, Phil. We're not supposed to shoot looters anyway.

Off Krauss's look through the chain link fence -

CUT TO:

EXT. DETROIT ALLEY - MOMENTS LATER

Leon is badly wounded, weaving down the block.

He crawls under a parked car.

LEON POV: from under the car he can see the tires of other cars rolling by.

He looks down at his shirt now, sees blood. We stay with him as traffic and pedestrians flow by.

UP THE BLOCK:

An OLD AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMAN, Southern migrant, scans the 'hood from her front porch. Hard-won dignity in her gaze. She gets herself upright, then negotiates the porch steps sideways like a crab, using her cane as an extra leg.

PARKED CAR -

LEON, breathing.

OLD LADY -

She hobbles down the street with her cane.

LEON POV -

Her old shoes.

OLD LADY -

She stoops down to his level -

OLD LADY
What are you doing under there?

LEON
I'm just down the street. Please get my wife, Roberta. We're on 5th street. Roberta.

OLD LADY
You need the ambulance!

LEON
No! No police. Just please go get Roberta.

CUT TO:

INT. DISMUKES' HOUSE - AFTERNOON - DETROIT

Sunlight filters through the drawn blinds. DISMUKES is sleeping when the phone rings. He's a big dude, tall, mid-twenties, with a determined set to his face. In fact, everything about his expression suggests that he's going to make the world work for him.

But the damn phone keeps ringing.

DISMUKES
(picking up the ringing phone)
I'm off - worked a double.
(beat)
Alright, alright.

INT. DISMUKES HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

DISMUKES MOTHER
Surprised to see you up.

Dismukes, now dressed in a blue security company uniform, addresses a coffee pot and grounds with serious intent. He adjusts the mixture and makes the brew, administers the boiling water, all very precise:

DISMUKES
Mister LeFrank called - he wants me to work.

DISMUKES MOTHER
I thought Vinny was your boss.

DISMUKES
Two jobs, two bosses, ma. The security company needs me for the looting.

DISMUKES MOTHER
Looting?

DISMUKES
Watch the news, ma.

Dismukes has his coffee now, and he heads towards the living room closet, flicking on the TV on the way.

DISMUKES (CONT'D)
(shouting to his mother)
People are losing their minds.

CLOSET:

In the back behind some clothes he pulls out a .308 Rifle, a pistol, and ammo for both.

TV:

T.V. NEWS ANCHOR
Day Three of the Detroit riots showed no signs of slowing down as angry rioters burned buildings to the ground...

DISMUKES
Right, burn your own building.

Mom stares at the TV.

T.V. NEWS ANCHOR
...And now we turn for more on this developing story to our police reporter to bring us the perspective of law enforcement.

T.V. NEWS REPORTER
Jim, police here report being attacked by snipers...

DISMUKES MOTHER
Snipers?!

He heads to the door, wrapping the rifle in a coat.

DISMUKES
Same thing happened in Newark.

Kissing her good-bye.

DISMUKES (CONT'D)
Don't forget your pills.

DIMUKES MOTHER
I always take my pills!

He smiles, exits.

EXT. DETROIT - DISMUKES' NEIGHBORHOOD

Dismukes makes his way down overcrowded streets, still lively despite the riots. KIDS playing games. A GIRL and her BOYFRIEND, necking. FACTORY WORKERS heading to the job, or coming home. And cars - cars everywhere. DISMUKES is greeted (or at least acknowledged) by many of the residents.

KID
What's happening, Preacher?

DISMUKES
Work. Money don't come from magic.

The kid is sorry he asked.

KID
That's right.

DISMUKES
Don't just say I'm right. Apply it, brother. *Be* right.

The kid nods, wishing this would end. Dismukes keeps going to his rusty ride.

INT./EXT. DISMUKES JALOPY - CONTINUOUS

He turns the key, puffs of exhaust, and rattles into traffic.

CUT TO:

EXT. DETROIT POLICE STATION HOUSE #10 - EVENING

Krauss, Flynn, and Demens pull up and get out.

The outside of the police station has been militarized with Jeeps and A DOZEN NATIONAL GUARD SOLDIERS piled around.

INT. DETROIT POLICE STATION HOUSE #10 - CONTINUOUS

COPS shouting racial epithets. Nearly a HUNDRED SUSPECTS in handcuffs are seated up against the wall, many wounded, all of them are black.

Krauss and his crew enter and push their way towards a DESK SERGEANT. (Find the TV playing on the sergeant's desk in the background) -

COP
(re: his handcuffed suspect)
Where am I supposed to put him?

SERGEANT
I don't care. Take him to your house!

KRAUSS
Sarge.

SERGEANT
Go straight to hell.

For the first time, Krauss seems thrown.

KRAUSS
What Sarge what?

SERGEANT
Homicide detectives wanna word with you.

INT. DETECTIVE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

A couple of DETECTIVES stand in the corner as Krauss walks in with Flynn and Demens.

DETECTIVE
Just him.
(re: Krauss)

Flynn and Demens hang back.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
We got a DOA at Ford Hospital, young black, shotgunned in the vicinity of
(MORE)

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
Virginia Park. Did I hear on the radio - you shoot a black guy earlier?

KRAUSS
Missed. We called it in.

DETECTIVE
You missed?

KRAUSS
Maybe I clipped him. He was real fast.

DETECTIVE
You know what we do here?

KRAUSS
Homicide.

DETECTIVE
That's right. We investigate murders. Sit down, patrolman.

Krauss sits. The Detective walks out of the room. Off Krauss's face --

CUT TO:

EXT. DETROIT - OVERHEAD VIEW

MARTHA AND THE VANDELLAS PRE-LAP
"Calling out around the World, are you ready for a brand new beat?"

From up here we can see that while part of the city smolders, other neighborhoods remain normal.

SINGING grows louder.

MARTHA AND THE VENDELLAS PRE-LAP
"Summer's here and the time is right for dancing in the streets."

[The Song is "Dancing in the Streets," the '67 Billboard hit by Martha and the Vandellas]

CUT TO:

EXT. THE FOX PARKING LOT

Nice cars pulling up. Folks dressed to dance.

MARTHA AND THE VANDELLAS PRE-LAP

(singing)
"They're Dancing in Chicago. Down in New Orleans."

INT. THE FOX - MUSIC HALL

The real MARTHA and the VANDELLAS are on stage.

MARTHA AND THE VANDELLAS

(singing)
Can't forget the Motor City!

The crowd goes wild.

MARTHA AND THE VANDELLAS (CONT'D)
All we need is music, sweet music.

INT. THE FOX - BACKSTAGE

In a hallway backstage, FOUR YOUNG SINGERS dressed in flashy green, pace around full of nervous energy and stage-fright.

Band leader CLEVELAND LARRY REED - twenty, African American, a rising young Motown artist - is whispering to himself -

LARRY
It's gonna be good, it's gonna be good.

Larry, as we will come to see, is a both an artist and a wild-card. His mood swings from fits of laughter to bouts of gloom. He is a child of the streets with plenty of hustle, but he doesn't court trouble with anyone. He is focused on his career as a professional musician. His bandmate and friend, MORRIS, has a more political and social outlook.

MORRIS
You pray. I'll make sure we get paid.

LARRY
No, come with me - it's gonna be good.

MORRIS
It's gonna be good.

LARRY
Yeah, it's gonna be good.

MORRIS
Okay, brother. We're with you.

LARRY
It's gonna be good.

Larry turns to a third friend, JIMMY, and gives him a look. Then he nods his head and makes a silent count, one, two... Three... All the guys together:

LARRY, JIMMY, MORRIS:
It's gonna be good.

LARRY
Alright. Key!

Morris sings a note. Jimmy sings a note, a little off, Larry shakes his head. He gets it right the second time.

MORRIS
Where's Fred?

JIMMY
He's late.

MORRIS
I can see that, brother.

LARRY
Is the A&R man here?

MORRIS
He's out there waiting to get his mind blown.

Larry peeks out of the curtain.

STAGE:

MARTHA AND THE VANDELLAS
(singing)
"There'll be music everywhere / There'll be swingin', swayin' and records playin' And dancin' in the streets"

AUDIENCE:

One white guy looks particularly groovy in an ORANGE JACKET.

MORRIS (O.S.)
That's him in the orange jacket, man.

BACKSTAGE:

Still peeking through the curtain -

LARRY
Oh, man, he's sharp.

MORRIS
He's Motown Records.

Just then, Fred shows up, out of breath.

LARRY
You're late.

FRED TEMPLE
Almost lost my job getting here.
Ford don't give a shit about Motown.

LARRY
I don't give a shit about the Ford Motor Company. Bumper cars and sheet metal motherfucker!? You about to be with the STARS!

FRED TEMPLE
I need to buy bread, Negro.
(realizes he doesn't want to upset Larry)
It's gonna be good.

LARRY
Sure?

Fred nods.

LARRY (CONT'D)
Alright. Hand me a towel, man. I'm perspiring.

FRED digs into his bag, hands LARRY a towel.

LARRY (CONT'D)
Thanks, brother. I need you here.

FRED TEMPLE
I'm here, man.

Darryl does the one thing that always puts Larry in a good mood. He sings one of Larry's songs.

DARRYL
(singing)
Some people are made of plastic -

Joining in -

LARRY
(singing)
Some people are made of wood -

MORRIS
(singing)
Some people have hearts of stone -

JIMMY
(singing)
Some people are up to no good -

LARRY, JIMMY, DARRYL, MORRIS:
But baby I'm for real / I'm as real
as real can get /

The STAGE MANGER comes in and watches them.

LARRY, JIMMY, DARRYL, MORRIS: (CONT'D)
If what you're looking for is real
loving / Then what you see is what
you get.

STAGE MANAGER
You're next.

CUT TO:

INT. THE FOX

STAGE:

ANNOUNCER
And our next very special guest, in
a few minutes, Detroit's own, The
Dramatics.

Respectful applause from the crowd.

BACKSTAGE:

The boys are delighted.

LARRY
This is it! Move out the way!

But then...

LEAD SINGER OF THE VANDELLAS (O.S.)
Ladies and Gentleman, I have some
bad news.

STAGE:

LEAD SINGER OF THE VANDELLAS
Oh, come on now, this is Detroit.
Everyone has to go home is all.
We'll be back.

From the back of the room -

SCARED AUDIENCE MEMBER
It's the riots!!

The crowd gets restless, scared -

LEAD SINGER OF THE VANDELLAS
The police said there ain't nothing
to worry about. Just everybody, if
you don't mind, we're going to -

The crowd starts to lose it -

LEAD SINGER OF THE VANDELLAS (CONT'D)
Stay calm everyone - stay calm -

BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

LARRY
Oh, no. Not today.

FRED
We got to go.

People start rushing past them, heading for the exits. But Larry stays frozen. Fred starts pushing Larry out of the backstage area -

LARRY
No.

Larry doubles back, pushes against the tide of stagehands in the narrow corridor, and makes his way to the stage curtains and pushes through to -

THE FOX THEATER STAGE

Though the room is empty, it's still magnificent. The gold leafed splendor of the ceiling. Red carpet and velvet chairs.

Mahogany walls like in European churches.

Larry goes to the microphone.

He touches it delicately.

Looks out at what might have been.

Then he picks up the microphone -

LARRY
(singing softly into mic)
What you see is what you get / What you see is what you get.

It sounds beautiful. The room, acoustically pristine.

Fred appears in the wings.

Larry ignores him.

Then he walks out the front door.

CUT TO:

EXT. DETROIT STREET - NEAR THE FOX THEATER - MOMENTS LATER

Total disorder.

Larry and the band members run to catch a CITY BUS.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION #10 - HOMICIDE DETECTIVE'S OFFICE

Krauss has been waiting in the office. His eyes are closed, dozing. The DETECTIVE walks in, waking Krauss.

KRAUSS
Excuse me. Been working straight shifts since the riot started.

DETECTIVE
The guy you shot at didn't make it home.

FLASHBACK:

LEON staggering down the street, weaving, bloody -

DETECTIVE
Ambulance found him bleeding out under a car.

PRESENT:

KRAUSS
You sure it's the same guy?

DETECTIVE
He's the only Virginia Park shooting today. You carry a shotgun, he had shotgun wounds. You wanna play ballistics?

KRAUSS
Jesus Christ, I'm sorry.

DETECTIVE
That's it?

KRAUSS
What else?

DETECTIVE
You shot him in the back.

KRAUSS
He was running away from me - where else was I supposed to shoot?

DETECTIVE
My point was ... him being no threat to you.

KRAUSS
In hindsight. But I'm thinking, "Why is he running, if all he did was steal groceries? Maybe he's killed someone in the grocery store." He's avoiding the police. What do you assume from that?

DETECTIVE
You don't assume -

Beat.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
If he had a weapon in his hand, that's another story. We don't shoot for robbery.

KRAUSS
You know, it's a war zone out there.

Detective keeps writing, then looks up, encouragingly -

DETECTIVE
The 10th had to shut down.

KRAUSS
They're destroying the city.
(MORE)

KRAUSS (CONT'D)
And we're facilitating by the message we send... that it's okay, go ahead, burn your houses down, rob stores, total chaos. Where does that lead to long term, Detective?

DETECTIVE
Alright, kid. Thank you.

KRAUSS
...Anytime.

DETECTIVE
I'm recommending murder charges.

KRAUSS
...

DETECTIVE
You go back to work, wait to hear from the D.A.

Krauss heads for the door.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
Hey kid, calm down out there.

INT. HALLWAY - OUTSIDE THE DETECTIVE'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Krauss, walking down the hall, is joined by his partners Flynn and Demens. As they walk out of the police station -

DEMENS
Trouble?

KRAUSS
Forget it.
(puts Demens in a jovial headlock)
He's just doing his job.

CUT TO:

INT. CITY BUS - LATER

Larry and the band ride the bus - in a different part of town now - when suddenly a rock comes through the window.

MORRIS
These people rising up!

Larry wants none of it.

LARRY
We got to get off the street.

EXT. DETROIT STREET - MOMENTS LATER

The Dramatics run down a street until they are stopped by a line of SOLDIERS facing the other direction against a CROWD of black people.

They double back. Smoke clouds on the horizon.

EXT. DETROIT SCHOOL STREET - MOMENTS LATER

They duck into a nook in between two buildings

DARRYL
We need to split up.

MORRIS
Five brothers together, you know they gonna say we're a gang.

LARRY
Come on now. We need to rehearse.

DARRYL
My mother will worry about me -

MORRIS
Let's go to 12th Street. Be a part of it.

LARRY
No. We're gonna go to the Algiers, it's right on Woodward, and write some songs. And they got a swimming pool and girls. Get wet two ways.

LARRY (CONT'D)
We working musicians, right? Let's go then.

- Everyone starts to run again

MORRIS
(shouting, jokingly imitating Black Power Movement)
As-Salam Alaykum, my brother --

EXT. DETROIT STREET - MOMENTS LATER

The band moves on, passing two WHITE COPS who tower over a BLACK KID squirming on the ground. A baton is raised. They run.

EXT. ALGIERS MOTEL - STREET - LATER

This part of the city has not been touched by the rebellion. The leafy streets are quiet.

They made it.

INT. ALGIERS MOTEL - MOMENTS LATER

Room keys slide across a desk.

MOTEL CLERK
Eleven dollars a night. Pay in advance.

LARRY
Not a problem.
(tosses down the bills)

MOTEL CLERK
Sign here. To rent a room you need to be at least eighteen years old.

Larry tosses bills on the table.

LARRY
Add that up to eighteen.

EXT. ALGIERS MOTEL POOL AREA

The POOL-SIDE scene is hopping - black girls and young guys, lounging around, listening to music, frolicking in the water and notably, TWO WHITE GIRLS in the mix. They make their way to the ANNEX and their room -

INT. ALGIERS MOTEL ROOM

The band crams into the small room.

LARRY
What do you want for eleven dollars? Okay - first up, let me hear - "All Because of You."

The guys begin to sing -

MORRIS
Look in my eyes and don't you see water -

BAND
It's all because of you.

EXT. ALGIERS MOTEL POOL AREA - LATER

Ripples in the water of a swimming pool.

A girl dives into the swimming pool - her boyfriend follows with an awkward cannonball.

ALL BBAND O.S.
It's all because of you

The song continues as we observe the improvised party scene - a guy fumbles with a pool toy, joints passed, music played, dancing, etc - in a quick montage.

The sun goes down.

INT. ALGIERS MOTEL ROOM - MUCH LATER

The boys are now lying on beds and on the floor.

It's been awhile since anyone contributed anything interesting.

LARRY
Somebody. Something.

JIMMY
Dig this.

Morris starts humming the melody to STOP IN THE NAME OF LOVE.

LARRY
'Stop In the Name of Love?'

Morris motions for the other band members to keep humming -

JIMMY
No man. No. This is different.
It's a hit.
(singing now)
Stop! Fucking-up-our-neighborhood!

Laughs.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
(still signing)
Before we break your ass. Think it
o-over. Think it o-over.

Darryl rises -

DARRYL
(signing)
Stop!
(MORE)

DARRYL (CONT'D)
Trying to make us work all night.
Be-cause I wanna go home,
La--arry
Think it o-over.

LARRY
Real smart.

Morris stands and makes the call.

MORRIS
We out man! I can't be in here singing - supposed to be outside swinging.

LARRY
Okay Malcolm.

Morris slaps his friend's hand -

MORRIS
Later man.

Larry nods and Morris walks out. The rest of the band follows. Fred rises too, expecting Larry to go but when he sees that Larry isn't moving, Fred sits back down.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALGIERS MOTEL STREET - BY THE GREAT LAKES INSURANCE BUILDING - EARLY EVENING

A white Detroit City COP is messing with a black KID on the street corner. Observant viewers will notice the giant ALGIERS MOTEL sign in the background.

The Cop has a shotgun on the kid.

KID
I don't have no watch - how am I supposed to know what time it is?

COP
(pokes him in the mouth with the shotgun)
It's past curfew, you know that.
Get. Off. My street.

From across the street, Dismukes watches and now crosses towards the altercation.

KID
You gonna shoot me because I don't have a watch?
(pushing against the shotgun)
Kill me?

Dismukes is now next to the Cop.

DISMUKES
Lebron get over here-
(grabbing the kid)
Dummy -
(hits him on the side of the head. To cop:)
He's my nephew. I'm with United Security. I'm guarding that grocery over there -

The cop shrugs and goes back towards his car, and we follow Dismukes as he drags the kid across the street.

KID
I ain't your nephew, motherfucker.

DISMUKES
Move off the street.

KID
They let you out, Uncle Tom -

Dismukes smiles, keeps pushing the kid down the block -

KID (CONT'D)
Push me again, I'll whoop your ass.

DISMUKES
You're not going to kick my ass -

KID
Dumb jacky giant -- I'll bust your head to the white meat.

Dismukes doesn't take the bait. He keeps smiling, calm and relaxed.

DISMUKES
You won't kick my ass.
(earnestly)
I'm a black belt in karate...

KID
...

DISMUKES
And even if you did win, ten guys over there -
(pointing to cops)
Will be on you, and behind them is ten thousand ... Take yourself home.

In the background, a NATIONAL GUARD contingent arrives on the corner in two JEEPS. Soldiers, led by WARRANT OFFICER ROBERTS, get out.

KID
So you the cool brother, huh?

Dismukes shrugs. What if he is? He extends his hand.

DISMUKES
Dismukes.

The kid stretches out his hand, too.

KID
Okay, Tom.

Dismukes watches the kid scurry off and then clocks the arrival of the National Guard.

INT/EXT. GROCERY STORE ACROSS FROM THE ALGIERS MOTEL

Dismukes greets one of his men, SPENCER, an older black guy, who is sitting behind the front register.

DISMUKES
Did you check all the windows and doors?

SPENCER
Fifteen, twenty minutes ago.

Dismukes picks up the house phone, starts dialing, cradling the phone in his ear as he finishes with Spencer:

DISMUKES
Check it again. I don't even want graffiti back there

The telephone line comes alive. We don't hear the other side of the conversation.

DISMUKES (CONT'D)
Everything is fine. No trouble here.
(beat)
I'll sleep when they stop rioting.
Good night, sir.

Dismukes hangs up the phone. Those NATIONAL GUARD troops across the street look scared as hell.

DISMUKES (CONT'D)
(to Spencer)
I'm going to go talk to those white guys ... Make sure they don't start shooting at us.

SPENCER
I'mma stay put, if that's okay.

Dismukes grabs his coffee pot and some mugs -

SPENCER (CONT'D)
(calling after him)
You sure you wanna tell those white boys we're here?

CUT TO:

EXT. ALGIERS MOTEL

Dismukes, in his guard uniform, ambles across the street to the Guard contingent, carrying his brew. Rifle slung over his shoulder.

DISMUKES
Melvin Dismukes. National Security, guarding the store across the street. And I come bearing gifts.

ROBERTS
Thank you.
(to his group)
Isn't that nice, boys?

Everyone is very appreciative as Dismukes hands out the cups and pours coffee.

ROBERTS (CONT'D)
(re: coffee)
All things considered, this is very good.

DISMUKES
Thank you. I don't have my usual appliances.

NATIONAL GUARD SOLDIER
It really is good.

ROBERTS
Sugar?

Dismukes smiles.

DISMUKES
Don't push it, man.

ROBERTS
It's nice to be in a quiet spot - earlier today in Black Bottom we took sniper fire. A bullet went right here.
(motioning by his head)

DISMUKES
Ain't no snipers down here man, just you, me and the people partying in that motel.

ROBERTS
So in your opinion, how long is this going to last?

Dismukes hesitates and another NATIONAL GUARD soldier interjects -

NATIONAL GUARD SOLDIER
Yeah - how long until ah these Negroes...people... quit?

NATIONAL GUARD SOLDIER 2
Yeah - whaddya think?

Dismukes struggles to maintain his smile.

DISMUKES
How the hell should I know?

INT. / EXT. ALGIERS MOTEL

Larry and Fred lie on the two little single beds in their hotel room, watching TV.

FRED
You'll get back on stage.

LARRY
It's not that simple, brother.

FRED
When they hear you blow? *Money raining.*

Larry clings to enthusiasm that he mistrusts.

LARRY
The manager's picky. They don't just let anyone on stage at the FOX THEATER! And my group don't even like to work. See how they left me like that?

FRED
Look at me.

Larry looks at his young friend.

FRED (CONT'D)
In the eyes.

LARRY
I'm looking in your eyes.

FRED
You gonna get a record deal.

LARRY
You know what, Fred. It's time to fix your little problem

FRED
Ah, man. I'm good.

LARRY
No, no. It's time, my brother

Larry throws his arm over Fred's shoulder and steers him out of the room

LARRY (CONT'D)
Right now...

CUT TO:

EXT. ALGIERS MOTEL POOL - CONTINUOUS

Larry steers Fred towards the pool party then notices the TWO WHITE GIRLS -

LARRY
So they white. Beggars can't choose.

FRED
Ah... man. What does that mean?

GIRLS:

The girls, JULIE AND KAREN, just shy of twenty, are trying to plan their next adventure. They notice Fred and Larry trying to sneak peeks.

KAREN
Those boys are eye-balling us.

JULIE
(takes a drag on her cigarette)
Sweetie, we are broke - there's rioting outside - and I'm not writing my parents again.

KAREN
Sweetie, you know what I say? Let freedom ring.

JULIE
I've had that freedom, thank you very much.

KAREN
No you haven't. Freedom doesn't mean giving it away for free. That's patriarchy.

JULIE
Patriarchy?

KAREN
The one where your thoughts are so controlled by men that they even tell you what's right and wrong.

JULIE
Only you could make prostitution sound high class.

KAREN
We do it together!
(ironic)
It's like a co-op.

JULIE
Just do it on your own -

KAREN
I'm not a slut!

Julie laughs.

JULIE
They're coming over.

Larry and Fred approach.

LARRY
Excuse me, Ladies. I'm Larry Cleveland. Would you happen to be in the middle of a private conversation?

JULIE
We must be neighbors, I'm Julie, Ohio.

KAREN
Karen, Ohio

LARRY
Cleveland's my last name -

JULIE
And I'm really from Ohio...

Awkward moment.

LARRY
What are ya'll doing in Detroit?

KAREN
Well, Julie here is a professional prostitute.

This is lame but Larry gives her the benefit of the doubt.

LARRY
Hmm. Okay.

JULIE
She's kidding. I'm a hairdresser -

KAREN
- And a ho.

JULIE
What do you guys do?

LARRY
I'm a singer in The Dramatics and Fred here is my bodyguard.

JULIE
The Dramatics?!

LARRY
Oh yeah.

JULIE
Never heard of them.

Realizing she overstepped.

JULIE (CONT'D)
But I love, love Motown. The Supremes are my favorite.

LARRY
If you like the Supremes, you gonna love The Dramatics.
(breaking into song)
"Baby, I'm for real / As real as real can get!"

KAREN
Oh my God, you can really sing.

Fred beams.

LARRY
It's who I am, you know. I sing.

KAREN
We're going be in show business. We're gonna do hair for the Supremes.

LARRY
Florence Ballard is a very good friend of mine.

JULIE
You know Florence Ballard?

LARRY
(winking)
Oh yes, she thinks she's my girlfriend.

Karen stands, which has the effect of putting her dress cleavage at Larry's eye level.

KAREN
We were just going to get something to eat. Would you like to join us?

LARRY
(to Fred)
You're hungry, right?

The girls rise and walk out, hips swaying. Larry and Fred walk right behind them.

CUT TO:

INT. ALGIERS MOTEL - COOPER'S ROOM - LATER

The room door opens and there's Carl Cooper, early twenties, tough and very street.

KAREN
Hey, Carl! We're starving.

CARL COOPER
Come on in then.

The girls do. Carl raises an eyebrow when he sees Larry and Fred in the hallway.

LARRY
(brightly)
Hello.

Carl is pretty sure he'd prefer that the girls had come alone.

CARL COOPER
I'll say it again, come on in.

Larry brushes past Carl, not about to be intimidated.

He looks around the room - hot dogs frying in a pan - music from three different radios, all playing at once, SOUNDS OVERLAPPING - and even worse all Cooper's friends, Aubrey, Lee, and Clark, are TALKING over the damn music.

These are not Larry's people.

LARRY
Nice joint.

AUBREY
Sit down, man.

Larry sits on one of the beds. The girls are over by the frying pan, checking out the hot dogs. Awkward smiles and nods between Larry and Fred and Aubrey, Lee and Clark.

AUBREY (CONT'D)
(re: Larry's clothes)
Nice duds.

Fuck you, too.

LARRY
We were performing today.

AUBREY
Uh-huh. Cool.

Larry pats the bed he's sitting on, motioning for Karen to come over -

LARRY
Hey Karen, the air conditioner is stronger here.

She sees right through but climbs on the bed anyway. Larry reaches over and strokes her hair. He leans in and kisses her. They kiss for a while, everyone else watching them.

KAREN
(genuine)
That's nice.

Larry looks around to make sure the other guys get his point. Then he motions for Fred to sit down next to Karen. Aubrey and Lee struggle to find something less lame than a stare.

LEE
Aubrey, man, turn up the fucking radio.

Aubrey does.

Larry and Karen go back to petting.

Aubrey turns up the radio even louder.

It's obnoxious now.

LARRY gets up and turns down two of the radios, leaving the JAZZ station playing the Coltrane Quartet *"I want to talk about you."*

LARRY
(throwing down)
At least let Trane speak -

Now Carl is pretty sure he's going to have to kick this guy's ass. But everyone quiets down, and they listen as Coltrane begins a solo.

Sheets of sound.

Then the drums take over -

JULIE
Beautiful! So sad that he died - he was young, right?

[NB: Coltrane died unexpectedly on July 17 of that year, five days prior to the riots.]

CARL COOPER
Forty - but he used his years. He lived.

LARRY
Unfortunately, it was his heroin.

CARL COOPER
Trane didn't overdose.

LARRY
I didn't say *overdosed*. But John Coltrane was a junkie for years. Love Supreme? Trane was on dope. That don't take nothing away from him as a spiritual example. He is one of my Saints. But heroin made him sick in his liver.

LEE
I heard the FBI poisoned him

LARRY
You wondering how I know? Trane's wife is a Detroit musician. Same set as me.

CARL COOPER
So you the expert on Coltrane.

CU TV NEWS: "We interrupt this bulletin to bring you continuing news of the racial disturbances in Detroit. The National Guard has been called in, and more than seven thousand have been arrested, most of them Negroes."

KAREN
Why is everything always violent?

Cooper sees a chance to regain his standing with the girls.

COOPER
What about your revolution, from the English? There was nothing non-violent about that. Liberty or death.

LARRY
She's from Cleveland, man. I highly doubt she follows your logic.

Last straw. Cooper pulls out a PISTOL from under his bed.

COOPER
Maybe this will help. Check this out -

(MORE)

COOPER (CONT'D)
(showing off the pistol)
You white. The police don't mess with you. But when you're black
(he points the pistol right at Larry)
It's like having a gun pointed right at you. Unless you an Uncle-Tom-hankerchief-head.

Larry doesn't flinch. He knows the ghetto games.

COOPER (CONT'D)
It's like this.
(play acting, to LEE)
Hey boy, get over here.

LEE
(playing along)
What did I do wrong, Officer?

Raising the pistol -

COOPER
You're on my street ain't you, nigga?
(to Karen)
That's how they express themselves. *My* street. *My* city.

Cooper cocks the trigger

LEE
Careful man -

COOPER
Boy, I'mma blow your face off!!!
Step away.

BOOM!

The gun goes off -

- Lee falls back, clutching his chest.

JULIE
Oh my God!
(rushing over to LEE)
You shot him!!

Lee rolls over, gasping for breath ... struggles to speak ... at last:

LEE
(faintly)
Hot dog please ...

Lee quits faking it, gets up, and all the tough guys laugh. We realize now looking at the pistol that it is merely a cap gun.

COOPER
Its not a real gun. It's a starter pistol, you know, for racing. Harmless.

As she walks out of the room -

COOPER (CONT'D)
It happens like that, sister. Just demonstrating white power.

Karen gets up to leave, too.

KAREN
So am I, honey.

Larry and Fred follow the girls.

INT. ALGIERS MOTEL - HALLWAY

KAREN
Sorry, Larry. They're usually nice guys.

LARRY
Don't let those fools bother you. Let's go down to my room and relax.

KAREN
Maybe later. We have to meet another friend.

LARRY
Yeah. Find me later.

Off his disappointment -

INT. ALGIERS MOTEL - CARL'S ROOM

Lee and Aubrey are still hanging out, smoking cigarettes, but the mood is now charged. Carl needs an outlet. He's leaning out the window, aiming his toy pistol at the contingent of National Guard soldiers and Dismukes.

CARL COOPER
I'm gonna teach these pigs a lesson right now.

LEE
They will shoot you back, brother.

CARL COOPER
Nah.

LEE
Bad idea.

CARL COOPER
They don't know where its coming from. Ready. One. Two.

LEE
Carl, relax. It's crazy enough in here already.

But Carl can't relax.

CARL COOPER
What?

LEE
We going get our asses beat, man.

Carl smirks. He pushes the gun out the window again, not aiming it, still looking at Lee.

CARL COOPER
These cops need to learn they can't be messing with us all the time. Two. Three!

Carl fires off a few shots out the window - bang, bang

STREET:

INSTANTLY - police car tires spinning, cloud of burning rubber -

ROOM:

Carl and Lee laugh their asses off at the retreating vehicle. Exuberant, Carl turns to his friends.

CARL COOPER
Run, cracker!

CUT TO:

EXT. DETROIT STREET - NATIONAL GUARD STAGING AREA

An OFFICER turns to one of his soldiers:

OFFICER
You hear that? Shots fired!

The soldier radios it in "shots fired, etc"

Everyone scrambles -

CUT TO:

INT. LARRY'S ROOM

Larry, relaxing on the bed, is on the phone with one of his girlfriends, LINDA TUCKER.

LARRY
(into phone)
Did you hear those gunshots, baby?

LINDA TUCKER
(over phone)
I didn't hear anything.

LARRY
Well, anyway ... if I get a record deal, we gonna drive a Cadillac.
(beat)
My boy Fred was just telling me that the rioting is getting so bad even Ford might shut down assembly.

LINDA TUCKER O.S.
(over phone)
That's terrible

LARRY
(into phone)
It is. But we should make the best of it. In a time of hate, love becomes more important. Maybe the most important. You know what I'm saying?

CUT TO:

INT. LINDA TUCKER'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Linda, in her teens, cradles the phone.

LINDA TUCKER
My mom says I can't leave the house right now. But I want to ...

INT. ALGIERS MOTEL FIRST FLOOR - LARRY'S ROOM

LARRY
(into phone)
Your mama, right, right. Tell her there's a swimming pool over here.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - INSURANCE BUILDING NEAR THE ALGIERS

National Guard SOLDIERS taking cover behind cars, scanning the area with their rifles.

Dismukes is among the crowd of soldiers. He sees Roberts crouching low behind a car across the street.

DISMUKES
Who's shooting?

Roberts has no clue.

ROBERTS
From down there, maybe.
(pointing down the street)

DISMUKES P.O.V:

- Checking vantage points from down the street

- Lots of places for a sniper to hide.

DISMUKES
Could be any one of those buildings.

POP, POP. Two more shots fired.

ROBERTS
Get DOWN!

They all crouch -

ROBERTS (CONT'D)
Shoot the lights!

Dismukes ducks back inside the grocery store.

INT. GROCERY STORE - CONTINUOUS

Sees Spencer -

DISMUKES
Sniper out there!

Spencer reaches under the cash register and pulls out a shotgun, which he hands to Dismukes, and a second gun which he keeps for himself - and they head outside

EXT. STREET NEXT TO ALGIERS - MOMENTS LATER

Dismukes and Spencer walk through the dark alley.

DISMUKES
Let's find this motherfucker.

CUT TO:

EXT. GREAT LAKES INSURANCE BUILDING NEXT TO ALGIERS - CONTINUOUS

Dismukes and his guy round the corner and find Roberts again.

More shots in the distance -

EVERYONE IS ON THE EDGE OF PANIC.

One of ROBERTS's guys falls to the ground -

ROBERTS
(to his fallen comrade)
Mike?!

MIKE
I'm okay! I didn't get hit!

ROBERTS
(scared and addressing nobody in particular)
We called the police.

They stayed glued.

Quiet but the THRUM of the city in the background.

And then headlight GLARE as a police car and THREE ARMY JEEPS pull up, disgorging a DOZEN NATIONAL GUARD SOLDIERS and THREE DETROIT POLICE - who just happen to be Krauss, Flynn and Demens.

INT. ALGIERS MOTEL - THIRD FLOOR - ROOM 6

Carl sees all the cars.

CARL
There's a lot of cops out there.

LEE
They lost?

CLARK
I don't think so. They coming for us now man!

POW POW!!! The window is shot out.

LEE
Get down, get down!

They hit the floor as the room gets torn to shreds by incoming rounds.

INT. ALGIERS MOTEL FIRST FLOOR - LARRY'S ROOM

Larry still on the phone with LINDA TUCKER.

- GLASS SHATTERS

LARRY
What the??!!
(into phone)
Did you hear that? Window just broke!

FRED looks at him -

LINDA TUCKER
(over phone)
Somebody's shooting?

LARRY
(into phone)
Hold on, baby. I'mma put the phone down. I better get dressed haha.

He puts the phone on the bed and goes for his pants and shirt

THEN -

A BARRAGE OF BULLETS HITS THE ROOM -

- FURNITURE SPLINTERING.

- WALLS CRACKING.

FRED
What the hell!

- THE BOYS HIT THE FLOOR, HUG THE FLOORBOARDS.

CRACK CRACK - MORE SHOTS -

- THE ROOM IS DESTROYED BY BULLETS

EXT. MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

The combined force of POLICE, PRIVATE SECURITY and NATIONAL GUARD is arrayed outside, taking cover behind cars and buildings.

DISMUKES:

He's eager to do something real. Smoke curling out of his shotgun barrel.

He looks over to the police and sees Krauss, who is also deadly serious. They connect.

INT. ALGIERS MOTEL - COOPER'S ROOM - THIRD FLOOR

The shooting has stopped.

Carl and Lee look at each in shock.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALGIERS MOTEL STREET - CONTINUOUS

Krauss crouched low and advancing, Demens and Flynn right behind him.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALGIERS MOTEL FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER *

A line of Detroit COPS including Krauss stacks up against the front door. One of the COPS tries the door handle, finds it locked and SHOOTS out the door.

They rush inside, Krauss now in the lead -

INT. ALGIERS MOTEL FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY

Carl comes running down the stairs from the second floor, hits the landing, sees the COPS, too late.

Krauss fires, killing him.

While the other COPS rush ahead, Krauss hangs back, hovering over Cooper's body.

He kneels down and places a SHINY OBJECT under Cooper's hand.

It's a knife.

CUT TO:

INT. ALGIERS MOTEL FIRST FLOOR - LARRY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lying on the floor of the room are LARRY and FRED.

COP
Police!

Several COPS rush in and ferociously attack Larry and Fred - tossing them against the wall -

The phone is still dangling on the bed, with LINDA TUCKER on the other line.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALGIERS

Dismukes trying to be stealthy. He's around the back of the motel. Finds a window to crawl through as the sounds of SHOUTING and more SHOOTING echo through the neighborhood.

INT. ALGIERS MOTEL - FIRST FLOOR REAR WINDOW

Dismukes makes it through the window and into the hallway. He hears more GUNSHOTS inside the hotel and cautiously makes his way towards the noise.

INT. ALGIERS MOTEL - FIRST FLOOR ROOM 3

Dismukes turns a corner to arrive at ROOM 3 - the door to which is open. He peers inside, shotgun at the ready.

DISMUKES
Hands up!

The room is empty, a messed up bed - Dismukes looks around -

Moves on to the HALLWAY -

CUT TO:

INT. LINDA TUCKER'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

LINDA TUCKER
(into phone)
Larry?

She hangs up. Dials the switchboard of the Algiers Motel.

OPERATIOR
(over phone)
Algiers Motel operator, how may I help you?

LINDA TUCKER
(into phone)
Miss, is something going on over there?

INT. ALGIERS MOTEL - FRONT OFFICE

OPERATIOR
(into phone)
Who am I speaking to?

LINDA TUCKER
My name is Linda Tucker and I was just talking to my boyfriend, Larry Reed, he's staying in ROOM A-1 and it sounds like someone is shooting in there.

OPERATIOR
I doubt that! Hold the line please ... I'll check.

INT. ALGIERS MOTEL FIRST FLOOR - ROOM 2

Dismukes comes across Carl's perforated body.

Blood pooling.

Dismukes stares, trying to reconstruct the shooting.

CUT TO:

INT. ALGIERS MOTEL - SECOND FLOOR ROOM 4

OUTSIDE THE ROOM:

FLYNN
POLICE! Put your hands up!

GREENE O.S.
We already did it! Don't shoot!

INSIDE:

Flynn and Demens bust into a room which is now occupied by Karen and Julie and a black guy who we will come to know is GREENE, late 20s, a war veteran, older than the rest of the crowd and already world-weary.

All of them are sitting on the bed with their hands up in the air.

Demens isn't quite sure how to react. He's never seen white girls on a bed with a black male, let alone an interracial couple before.

Flynn makes no effort to hide his disgust. Without warning of any kind, he fires his shotgun twice -- striking the BATHROOM door in the back of the room.

FLYNN
(casually, re: the bathroom)
Is anybody in there?

GREENE
No, sir.

Several other COPS now burst in, breaking the weird spell of the moment.

Flynn clubs Greene with his SHOTGUN.

FLYNN
GET UP!

Another COP grabs the two girls and roughs them up -

COP
What the hell are you doing here?

Julie's head takes a blow - cut bursts open - as the COPS push them out and Flynn takes a long look at Karen's bare legs, swishing beneath her mini-skirt.

INT. ALGIERS MOTEL SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

A lot of frightened bodies crammed into tight quarters. Here is where many of the historic events of the evening will unfold. The city cops are lining up everyone, eight people in all, forcing them to face the wall, spread their legs, hands over their heads.

IN THE ROOM AT THE END OF THE HALL:

Dismukes is still standing over the body of Carl Cooper, when Krauss comes up.

DISMUKES
What happened?

KRAUSS
Fella here had a knife and he went for my gun.

One of the COPS gets Krauss's drift and -

COP
I heard someone shout "get off my gun."

KRAUSS
It happened fast.

Dismukes barely believes what he's about to say:

DISMUKES
I guess you had to defend yourself.

KRAUSS
He might be the shooter.

Krauss looks through Carl's wallet, reads his I.D.

KRAUSS (CONT'D)
Shame. Young kid like that.

The blood from COOPER's body is now oozing towards the hallway, so we swing back there ...

HALLWAY

We are with Aubrey - he fixes his eyes on the floor -- when he sees the BLOOD.

LEE
Don't look.

Aubrey can't help himself.

LEE (CONT'D)
Aubrey!

AUBREY:

Turns the corner and sees Cooper's body and bullet wounds.

AUBREY
Carl.

A NATIONAL GUARD SOLDIER pushes Aubrey back in line - as Krauss watches him leave with an evaluative stare.

Aubrey doesn't know it right now, but he should never have gone to look at that body.

WALL:

Aubrey pins his hands to the wall.

AUBREY
(whispering to LEE)
They killed Carl-

LEE
(too loudly)
No way. You sure?!

NATIONAL GUARD SOLDIER
No talking, you two!

Krauss comes out of the room -

KRAUSS
(to the hotel guests)
Terrible news, folks. One of the guests is dead. He tried to take a police officer's weapon, ended up getting shot.

Beat.

KRAUSS (CONT'D)
Carl Cooper.

CRIES up and down the line from Cooper's friends. Larry gets nauseous. Fred looks at him with concern.

KRAUSS (CONT'D)
May he rest in peace. Amen.

Krauss walks up and down the line.

KRAUSS (CONT'D)
But let's not be stupid in this situation. We still have a crime scene here and you're all suspects.

Pin-drop silence. Krauss settles behind Fred.

KRAUSS (CONT'D)
Don't turn around. Was Carl the one doing the shooting?

Nobody speaks.

KRAUSS (CONT'D)
Somebody better be honest with me.

TWO STATE POLICE descend the stairs.

STATE COP
We looked around - didn't find a gun.

KRAUSS
(yelling to State police)
Doesn't mean it's not here!

Then Krauss regains his composure:

KRAUSS (CONT'D)
(to the line up)
Be reasonable with me. I got nothing against you people. Just tell me where it is.

LEE
(turns around to face Krauss)
You the one shooting people! Carl didn't shoot nobody.

Krauss slams him with the butt of his shotgun and Lee falls. Flynn drops a knife near Lee.

FLYNN
Pick it up and defend yourself?

Lee disregards the knife.

He rises up.

LEE
I'm not playing your game.

FLYNN
We both know what is going to happen anyway.

LEE
Fuck you cracker!

Flynn hits Lee again, prompting Demens to walk out of the room. Krauss makes a note of his leaving.

KRAUSS
You think you can shoot at innocent people and get away with it?

Krauss hits Lee in the back of the head.

Now Dismukes intervenes -

DISMUKES
Let me search the place again - I'll take him.
(gesturing to LEE)

Dismukes grabs Lee and pushes him up the stairs to search the second floor -

STAIRS:

Lee looks over his shoulder (as he climbs the stairs) and sees Krauss targeting his next victims:

KRAUSS
Start praying, people. I'm gonna kill you one by one until one of you tells me what's going on here. I'll just assume you're all criminals. Which you probably are. If you're honest.

Everyone on the line starts praying in an overlapping chorus:

AUBREY
Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

CLARK
(under his breath)
Lord let me get this honky in my hands.

Krauss misses this.

KRAUSS
(to Larry)
Pray good and loud.

LARRY
Oh Jesus.
(louder)
Please help these police find what they need.

KRAUSS
He's really praying!

The TWO STATE POLICE walk out in disgust and we follow them outside --

EXT. ALGIERS MOTEL STREET - CONTINUOUS

Find Demens outside where there's a crowd of STATE POLICE and NATIONAL GUARD milling about and we stay with the two STATE POLICE who had been inside the hotel as they find their SERGEANT.

STATE COP
I gotta tell you, Detroit PD is going nuts in there.

STATE POLICE SERGEANT
Whaddya you mean?

STATE COP
It looks like they're terrorizing suspects. Beating and so forth, to get a confession.

STATE POLICE SERGEANT
That's not correct. They have civil rights.

STATE COP
That's what I'm saying. It don't look right to me.

STATE POLICE SERGEANT
Let's give them the case. I don't wanna be involved in a mix-up.
(to his remaining officers)
Let's GO!

The STATE POLICE head towards their cars, leaving the scene of the crime.

CUT TO:

INT. ALGIERS MOTEL SECOND FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Dismukes and Lee search the room with jangled nerves. Lee looks under the bed - tossing aside sheets and pillows

LEE
They gonna kill us.

DISMUKES
Why? You gonna be crazy?

Lee turns -

LEE
They the ones lost their minds. When they saw white girls in the same place as black men.

Dismukes tries to rationalize. Not easy.

DISMUKES
They're looking for a *sniper*.

LEE
Carl wasn't no sniper.

DISMUKES
So if a guy goes for your gun, you gonna let him have it because he's black?

They look at each other.

Dismukes shifts his shotgun in his hands.

LEE
You hold a shotgun with two hands. Police had a gun just like yours. How you gonna even try and take that?

DISMUKES
Lotta ways.

Lee walks past, disgusted. Dismukes catches him.

DISMUKES (CONT'D)
Just don't antagonize these guys. Survive the night.

CUT TO:

INT. ALGIERS MOTEL - FIRST FLOOR

Lee and Dismukes have returned to the first floor where they find everyone still lined up against the wall.

KRAUSS
Did you find it?

DISMUKES
No. Just this stuff -

Dismukes passes over a couple of knives and an armful of LOOT , cartons of Cigarettes, cans of FOOD, a CAMERA, a NEW RADIO.

DISMUKES (CONT'D)
All this looks stolen.

KRAUSS
He wouldn't even tell *you*.
(to LEE, grabbing him)
Come on -

Krauss pushes Lee into a room and Flynn and Demens follows as does Dismukes.

INT. ALGIERS MOTEL FIRST FLOOR ROOM 2 - CONTINUOUS

KRAUSS
Lie down on the floor.

Lee reluctantly lies down.

Krauss shoulders his shotgun and draws a REVOLVER, which he puts near Lee's head and cocks it.

Then Krauss does something strange.

He winks at Dismukes.

KRAUSS (CONT'D)
I got nothing against you people. Tell me where the gun is and who did the shooting, or I'll kill you.

LEE
I swear I don't know.

KRAUSS
Okay.

And he FIRES.

At the last second adjusting his aim so the bullet goes into the floor board near Lee's head.

Krauss leans down to Lee's ear.

KRAUSS (CONT'D)
Stay quiet or the next one will be for real.

Krauss winks at Dismukes again - sees that Roberts, the young guy in charge of the NATIONAL GUARD detail, has also witnessed the mock execution -

KRAUSS (CONT'D)
(to all)
This is gonna make em talk, watch.

Then he walks out into the -

HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Now Krauss addresses the line-up.

KRAUSS
That one didn't even kick.
(to the SOLDIERS)
Any of you guys wanna kill one?

The SOLDIERS have varying reactions - some shake their heads, no - but one or two smile at the sadistic display.

Krauss turns to Roberts

KRAUSS (CONT'D)
(to ROBERTS)
You wanna kill one?

ROBERTS
Sure.

Roberts grabs Clark off the line and pushes him towards the room where Krauss had taken Lee.

KRAUSS
Use another room.

ROBERTS pushes Clark down the HALL to another room.

CLARK
Don't shoot me, officer, I ain't done nothing.

ROBERTS
Get going.

CLARK
Please, officer.

Roberts pushes him inside the room.

THE ROOM:

CLARK
Look man, I don't know where the fucking gun is. You looked for it. Right?

ROBERTS
Kneel Down. And shut your mouth.

Clark gets on his knees

CLARK
Oh man I know you can't murder somebody like this. You can't do it.

ROBERTS
SHUT THE FUCK UP.

Roberts shoots the wall above Clark - then glares at him.

ROBERTS (CONT'D)
Now be quiet. Or the next one will be for real.

Clark nods.

In total shock.

INT. ALGIERS - HALLWAY

Roberts comes back out into the hallway.

ROBERTS
(announcing to the group)
I killed that nigger.

Krauss comes up to the girls -

KRAUSS
What's your part in all this? You probably do know where the gun is - and you're protecting these guys. But don't do that. That's foolish.

KAREN
Get away from me.

KRAUSS
You think you get a pass because you're white?
(to FLYNN)
Find out what she knows.

Flynn pushes Karen into ROOM 3. She's crying and cursing him.

INT. ROOM 3

FLYNN
Alright, there. Miss, is everything okay? No injuries on you?

He reaches out to her shoulder.

KAREN
Don't touch me.

FLYNN
Try to keep calm. What are you doing, living here?

KAREN
It's a hotel. Isn't it?

FLYNN
A little prostitution?

KAREN
I'm visiting from Ohio. My father is a judge.

FLYNN
Your father know you're here, living with the blacks?

KAREN
There are black people here? I didn't notice, I'm color blind.

FLYNN
Yeah. What color am I? Blue?

KAREN
You look yellow to me, sir.

He slaps her.

FLYNN
You're working prostitution.

KAREN
No.

He slaps her again.

FLYNN
Fucking these black guys.

KAREN
They're kids. What's the matter with you?

He starts walking out.

FLYNN
I'm trying to protect you, miss. Stay there.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

FLYNN
(to Krauss)
She's a hooker, boss.

KRAUSS
Alright.
(to Greene)
So you are the pimp.

GREENE
No, sir. You are mistaken.

KRAUSS
What?

GREENE
...

Krauss grabs Greene and pushes him into the room with Karen. Flynn follows.

INT. ROOM 3 - CONTINUOUS

KRAUSS
(to GREENE and the girls)
We're going to get this straightened out.
(to GREENE)
How long you been pimping these young girls and destroying their minds and bodies?

GREENE
I just met them. I ain't pimping. I just got out of the war.

KRAUSS
You're a veteran?

GREENE
Yes, sir.

KRAUSS
(hitting GREENE, who falls to his knees)
We don't need pimps in the Army. You probably drove a supply truck.

Greene on his knees looks up -

GREENE
I was Airborne.

CUT TO:

INT. ALGIERS MOTEL FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY

Everyone lined up against the wall is temporarily unguarded. All the COPS are dealing with Greene and the girls.

LARRY
(whispering to FRED)
We gotta get the fuck out of here.

FRED
They're right outside that door.

LARRY
Go out the back!

FRED
They'll see us.

More CRIES from the next room.

LARRY
Fuck this.

Larry moves as quietly as he can to the front door - Fred right behind him -

Through the glass he can see -- A SMALL CROWD of LAW ENFORCEMENT outside, including DISMUKES and a few NATIONAL GUARD SOLDIERS.

So he moves back to the wall, resuming the position of his hands over his head.

LARRY (CONT'D)
We're dead.

FRED
We'll make it.

LARRY
We've seen too much, they're gonna have to kill us, right here.

FRED
Be cool, man. They gonna get tired of beating.

Larry decides to give it another try - and he bolts away from the line -

- This time heading towards the kitchen and the BACK DOOR. Fred follows him.

KITCHEN AREA -

They peer down the hallway - see nobody -

- Then they see a POLICE OFFICER outside.

They're trapped.

- They notice another door, leading to a staircase to the basement.

- Reluctantly they descend the creaky stairs.

- Down into the dark interior.

BASEMENT

A cobwebbed chamber. They push through the gloom.

- Dripping pipes

- A cat scampers past

The BASEMENT exit passageway has a high-window with a view to the outside, and the boys pull themselves up to get a peek.

OUTSIDE:

Nothing but darkness.

Then: a footstep. A **black boot.**

BASEMENT:

The boys drop down from the window.

LARRY
(whispering)
We're dead.

Fred deflates.

LARRY (CONT'D)
Come on!

They head back up the stairs, making their way back to the group.

INT. ALGIERS MOTEL ROOM 3

Back to the girls and Greene, who has been beaten, judging by the bruises on his face. He's surprisingly self-possessed:

GREENE
Can I reach into my pocket for identification?

Greene takes out an Army Card and hands it to Krauss.

GREENE (CONT'D)
Says right there, *Sergeant First Class.* Eight tours. Honorable discharge.

KRAUSS
This your girl?

GREENE
Met her just now.

KRAUSS
(to Karen)
What's his name?

KAREN
I don't know.

GREENE
My name is Karl Greene.

KRAUSS
Nobody asked you.

GREENE
You just said, 'What's his name?'

KRAUSS
I oughta break your neck.

GREENE
Look man, I won't make any trouble - but I'm not going to lie down for you, neither.

KRAUSS
What are you doing in Detroit?

GREENE
Looking for work like everyone else.

KRAUSS
Get back in the line.

GREENE
Can I have my Government card back?

Krauss returns the card and GREENE leaves, escorted by FLYNN.

FLYNN
I was in the Air Force myself. We had blacks living with us in the barracks. Wasn't a problem at all.

CUT TO:

INT. ALGIERS MOTEL - ROOM 2

A NATIONAL GUARD soldier kneels down to LEE who is still on the floor.

SOLDIER
Why don't you get out of here - run out the back.

A trick?

SOLDIER (CONT'D)
I mean it, *run*. I don't want you getting killed like the others. Run. Right now.

Lee bolts out the back door. The NATIONAL GUARD soldier stands in the doorframe, watches him run.

Lee disappears.

CUT TO:

INT. ALGIERS MOTEL FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

KRAUSS and FLYNN confer about what to do next.

FLYNN
The one who was praying good, he's okay. And you can scratch off G.I. Joe.

KRAUSS
That leaves that big motherfucker I took into the room. I like him for it.

INT. ALGIERS MOTEL ROOM 2 - MOMENTS LATER

KRAUSS and FLYNN walk in and see that LEE is gone.

Krauss thinks of how this will look in his report.

KRAUSS
Suspect escaped.

FLYNN
We need another one.

Krauss nods.

KRAUSS
Go back to those girls - they know more than they're saying.

KRAUSS and FLYNN go back to the line.

LINE:

KRAUSS
Who wants to go next?

FRED
(quivering)
Officer, can I say something?

KRAUSS
Go ahead.

FRED
You might have the wrong house.
'Cause nobody we saw was shooting at
the police here.

KRAUSS
It's possible we made a mistake.

Wipes the sweat off his brow.

KRAUSS (CONT'D)
But I need to know for sure. Can't
let a cop-killer get away, can I?

He goes up to Karen.

KRAUSS (CONT'D)
You want to die now, or watch us
kill these others first?

Krauss' face edging closer to Karen's - as if he's going to bite. Or maybe kiss her.

Karen finally snaps. Hysteria bursting out, she SCREAMS.

KAREN
AHHHHHHH!

CUT TO:

INT. ALGIERS MOTEL - ROOM 4 MOMENTS LATER

Flynn pushes Karen and tries to stop her screaming.

FLYNN
Shut up!

She won't.

The effect is blood curdling.

It triggers Flynn.

FLYNN (CONT'D)
You wanna cry?
(shouting)
I'll give you something to cry about.

Flynn reaches out and rips her dress - tearing it off her body.

She's naked now.

FLYNN (CONT'D)
I guess you don't have any weapons on your person.

KRAUSS
(to the girls)
Aren't you ashamed of yourselves?

KAREN
You're the one checking out my tits.

FLYNN
You're having sex with niggers.

KAREN
It's 1967, asshole.

KRAUSS
Honestly, you don't mind the Afro-sheen in their hair? The way it smells?

KAREN
You're on some trip.

Krauss shakes his head. These girls are hopeless.

FLYNN
(to Greene)
You think you can come in my city and pimp out a bunch of young girls? Would you try that in Alabama? Or wherever you're from?

GREENE
I told you, it wasn't like that.

KRAUSS
Shut up. I don't care if you are in the Army. I'll drown all you pimps in the river until the city is clean again.

Finally, one of the National Guard soldiers, ROBERTS, recovers his sense of decency.

ROBERTS
(to Krauss)
You gonna question them or I'm gonna take them outta here.

KRAUSS
(turns to Karen, kneels down to her)
Hey, doll, you might be a good kid after all. Be straight with me now. Who was shooting at the National Guard out there?

Karen takes a deep breath.

KAREN
Mister, I didn't see anybody shoot at the National Guard. I would tell you if I had.

KRAUSS
Really?

KAREN
You can think I'm a slut if you want - but I was raised right.

He smiles. Believes her.

ROBERTS
I'll get them outta here.

Roberts lifts Julie up, and takes Karen with his other arm.

ROBERTS (CONT'D)
(to the girls)
Let's get you covered up.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALGIERS MOTEL - LATER

Roberts and Dismukes guide Karen and Julie, now wrapped in sheets, and walk them towards the main hotel.

KAREN
You're fucking murdering those kids! Fuck!

ROBERTS
No girls -

JULIE
(to Roberts)
Why don't you stop them?!

KAREN
(to Julie)
This animal did it too! He shot one of them.

ROBERTS
No, girls, girls, they're just scaring them. It's an interrogation tactic. They're not really killing them.

KAREN
Are you nuts, mister? I saw. Those guys are getting murdered in cold blood.

They've reached the HOTEL and shuffle inside, going through the door

INT. ALGIERS MOTEL - MAIN WING

ROBERTS
(going through the door to the hotel)
It's not real. I didn't shoot and neither did the other. It's to get those guys to fess up about the location of the gun.

JULIE
Who said they even had a gun?

ROBERTS
...

JULIE
If they did, it was just a toy. It wasn't a *real gun.*

OFF Roberts' reaction.

INT. ALGIERS MOTEL - MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They walk into Karen and Julie's room and Julie finally sees herself in the mirror, touches the gash on her forehead.

ROBERTS
(to Dismukes)
Take a look at her head.

DISMUKES
Gonna need stitches. Medical attention.

KAREN
Will you take us to the hospital?

Roberts suddenly realizes the repercussions of bringing these two bloodied girls into the hospital - the inquiries, the investigations -

ROBERTS
Not tonight. You're better off going in the morning, when you're fresh.
(he looks at the wound again)
It won't hurt to get it looked at in the morning.

DISMUKES
Sure.

He heads for the door.

JULIE
Are we safe here?

Roberts nods.

KAREN
She means are you going to tell the police where we are?

ROBERTS
No.

The men leave.

Julie and Karen fall into each other's arms.

KAREN
(whispering in her ear)
We're going to be okay, sweetie.

JULIE
But those boys.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM 2 - MOMENTS LATER

Krauss and Flynn confer again.

KRAUSS
Let's get our confession already and vacate the premises.

Krauss gets an idea.

KRAUSS (CONT'D)
Demens should do it.

DEMENS
Do what?

Krauss raises his voice so everyone in the line can hear.

KRAUSS
You haven't killed a nigger yet.

DEMENS
I don't know about that.

KRAUSS
Come on! Sure you do.

He slaps Demens on the shoulder again.

DEMENS
Whatever you think.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Demens goes up to Aubrey, grabs him -

DEMENS
Come with me. I need to ask you some questions.

INT. ROOM 5 - CONTINUOUS

DEMENS pushes Aubrey inside the room - using his shotgun as a poker.

Aubrey raises his hands trying to cover his face -

AUBREY
Please, please. Don't shoot me.

DEMENS
Where's the gun?

AUBREY
I don't know. Please don't shoot me.

DEMENS
I've got no cause to shoot you.

AUBREY
Please.

DEMENS
I ain't never shot anybody in my life.

BOOM!

He blasts Aubrey in the chest at close range.

BOOM!

He hits him in the shoulder - spinning him.

Aubrey collapses in a heap on the floor.

Demens looks at him, then turns - sees that Roberts witnessed this - or some of it - from the hallway.

INT. HALLWAY

Demens walks past Roberts, and Flynn, and finds Krauss at the end of the line.

Krauss grins at him.

DEMENS
So that's done.

KRAUSS
Great. Good job.

DEMENS
Yeah. I didn't think I could, but I did it. Boy, I feel funny.

KRAUSS
It's the right thing.
(beat)
He'll talk now.

DEMENS
(deeply confused)
What do you mean?

Krauss doesn't catch his confusion.

Plows ahead -

KRAUSS
(to the line)
Another one bites the dust.
(MORE)

KRAUSS (CONT'D)
I bet some of you thought we weren't serious. This is Detroit. We don't bluff.

Krauss walks up and down the line.

KRAUSS (CONT'D)
Who wants to be next? We still haven't found our gun, and we're running out of time, people.

No answer. Krauss goes into the room where Demens had just been. Demens follows.

INT. ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Krauss sees the body of Aubrey.

This wasn't part of the plan.

His voice drops -

KRAUSS
You shot him, Demens.

DEMENS
I got him.

KRAUSS
Jesus, Marty. We didn't shoot the other guys. We were just playing with them.

DEMENS
Playing what?

KRAUSS
A game to get them talking - scare the wits out 'em. You know, interrogating tactics.

Demens falls silent.

Stunned.

DEMENS
Jesus.

KRAUSS
So he tried to take your shotgun, and you defended yourself. Okay.

DEMENS
Oh Jesus.

KRAUSS
(sternly)
Straighten out. He grabbed he went for your firearm, you warned him. You had to defend yourself. Line of duty. Fill in the goddamn details.

Krauss walks out, furious.

Off Demens' sickened face -

INT. ALGIERS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Krauss approaches Flynn.

KRAUSS
Marty shot the guy.

FLYNN
Wow - he did?

KRAUSS
We need to wrap this up and get out of here.

Flynn nods, thinking it over -

FLYNN
We don't have a suspect. Arrest all of them?

KRAUSS
We need to just get out of here. They're not going to say anything if they're smart.

Krauss scans the remaining guys in the line-up, focuses in on Greene.

KRAUSS (CONT'D)
(to Greene)
You are free to go. You're not going talk about this, right? Ever?

Greene shakes his head, no.

KRAUSS (CONT'D)
'Cause I got your name.

GREENE
I don't have yours - I don't know nothing about you.

Krauss chuckles. He leads Greene down the hall to Cooper's body and points to the corpse -

KRAUSS
What's this here?

GREENE
I don't see nothing.

Krauss slaps him on the shoulder.

KRAUSS
Get going.

Greene exits.

EXT. ALGIERS MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Greene breathes fresh air.

The STREET is quiet. He heads over to the front OFFICE of the MOTEL, and we follow him as he goes inside.

INT. ALGIERS MOTEL - FRONT OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The TELEPHONE OPERATOR and RECEPTIONIST look up at Greene. He walks over to a chair and sits down in it.

GREENE
How long you ladies working tonight?

RECEPTIONIST
We're here all night.

Greene closes his eyes.

GREENE
I'm going to sleep here then. I'm staying in ROOM 4. But I'm going to sleep here.

OFF his eyes -

CUT TO:

INT. ALGIERS - HALLWAY

Krauss is closing down the scene.

KRAUSS
(to Larry)
What would you do if I said run and don't come back?

Fred and Larry look at each other.

Larry takes off out of the back door -

KRAUSS (CONT'D)
(to Fred)
Come here and collect your belongings.

Fred follows Krauss into room 2 - where he sees the DEAD BODY of Aubrey. Flynn follows them. Krauss now gives Fred the same test he administered to Greene.

KRAUSS (CONT'D)
Is everything all right?

FRED
...

KRAUSS
Hello?

FRED
You killed him?

KRAUSS
I don't see anything.

FRED
There's a dead guy right here!

Krauss draws his pistol and shoots Fred three times. Flynn does the same, both of them killing him.

CUT TO:

EXT. DETROIT STREETS - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Larry is running hard down an alley, and we follow him in real time as he turns down another alley -

- We stay with him as he avoids COPS and SOLDIERS, the city a maze of LAW ENFORCEMENT.

- And now he's across an OPEN FIELD

SUDDENLY: WHITE SPOT LIGHTS - square on his face, so bloody and pulped - the light blinding his eyes.

POLICE OFFICER
Halt!

Larry kneels, preparing for the end ...

WHITE POLICE OFFICERS approach

POLICE OFFICER #1
(concerned)
Look at this guy!

A second POLICE OFFICER starts to pick up Larry.

POLICE OFFICER #2
Come on, pal. We need to get you to the hospital.

They pick up Larry.

He sees these white faces and passes out.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALGIERS MOTEL AREA - NEXT MORNING

Birds in the trees.

Everything seems normal.

INT. ALGIERS MOTEL FRONT OFFICE - MORNING

A door opens, the MOTEL OPERATOR walks in, waking up Greene in the chair he slept in.

GREENE
Go have a look in the back annex.

He walks out the door.

EXT. ALGIERS MOTEL ANNEX - MOMENTS LATER

The Motel Operator walks towards the Annex building, noticing the broken glass, the smashed doors.

She opens the front door into the hallway.

Turns into a bedroom -

Sees: BODIES SPLAYED ON THE FLOOR, BLOOD SPLATTERS -

CUT TO:

EXT. DETROIT WATER AND POWER DEPARTMENT GARAGE - MORNING

A sprawling facility, trucks and machines, city workers moving to and fro. The municipal hive.

INT. DETROIT WATER AND POWER DEPARTMENT GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

RASPING gears. The metal teeth turn - white foreman, PETE, calling across the room -

PETE
Hey Aubrey!

AUBREY SR, a forty-something African American wearing the Department of Water and Power uniform, loading boxes on the other side of the cavernous shop, can't hear over the din.

PETE (CONT'D)
(shouting)
Aubrey! Phone call.

AUBREY SR.
Say again?!

PETE
You got a phone call from home.

AUBREY SR.
...

PETE
There's something happened. One of your boys is in trouble or got hurt.

They start walking back to the office.

AUBREY SR.
Doggone. I hope it's not Tanner. He's always googy-googy.

INT. SANITATION DEPARTMENT OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

AUBREY SR. Stands with phone in his hand.

AUBREY SR.
Yes?

INT. POLLARD HOUSEHOLD

ROBERTA
(his wife, into phone)
Well Aubrey, they found Aubrey dead this morning at the Algiers hotel.

INT. SANITATION DEPARTMENT OFFICE

AUBREY SR.
(into phone)
No. No. Aubrey is supposed to be home.

EXT. DETROIT NEIGHBORHOOD - AFRICAN AMERICAN AREA

Rows and rows of wooden houses, many in ruins.

INT. POLLARD HOUSEHOLD

Aubrey Sr, his wife Roberta, his mother, MAW, and two of his sons, sit in the living room, trying to cope. Aubrey Sr is holding picture of Aubrey Jr.

AUBREY SR.
Maw, what is this? A mistake?

Nobody knows what to say.

AUBREY SR. (CONT'D)
It's got to be a mistake because I know Aubrey has more sense than that.

MAW
Well, baby, you never know. Let's go see.

INT/EXT. POLLARD HOUSEHOLD - MOMENTS LATER

Aubrey Sr and his mother go outside.

EXT. DETROIT STREET - IN FRONT OF POLLARD HOUSEHOLD

MAW
Where is it - the city morgue? By the police station?

AUBREY SR.
Yes, I reckon. Five miles.

EXT. STONE YARD - AFTERNOON - DAYS LATER

A large slab of SANDSTONE, fireplace hearth, is being dragged across the ground by Dismukes. He goes back to another pile to move another slab, wiping his brow in the afternoon sun.

Three DETROIT POLICE come through the back and surround Dismukes.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. SQUAD CAR - LATER

Driving through the Detroit factory district ...

INT. SQUAD CAR - CONTINUOUS

Dismukes in the back, cops in front. The DRIVER looks at Dismukes in the mirror.

COP DRIVER
Little detour.

He pulls to the side of the street. The COPS get out and make a deliberate show of *unlocking* the back seat door nearest to Dismukes.

COP DRIVER (CONT'D)
Be right back.

Dismukes watches them go through the rear view mirror. Ahead of him is an empty street.

STREET:

The COPS smoke.

COP DRIVER
He gets out, I'm going to plug him in the back.

COP
Within your rights.

CAR

Dismukes stays put. He closes his eyes.

CLUNK!

The passenger door opens - the DRIVER COP leans in -

DRIVER COP
I figured you for a runner.

DISMUKES
Not me. I don't run.

CUT TO:

EXT. DETROIT POLICE STATION - LATER

Establishing shot.

INT. DETROIT POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

Dismukes is led into a room with TWO DETECTIVES.

DISMUKES
I assume this is about what went on at the hotel.

DETECTIVE #2
Something happen at a hotel?

DISMUKES
If you don't know, I'll tell you.
(MORE)

DISMUKES (CONT'D)
I was doing security by Wisconsin, and on Tuesday night, we heard gunfire coming from the area by the Algiers. That direction.
(beat)
The police came, State Police, National Guard. There was a lot of shooting and when I went in there - three kids had been killed.

DETECTIVE #1
No.

Dismukes starts to cry.

DISMUKES
The blood was fresh. It hadn't congealed yet.

DETECTIVE #2
Killed just before you arrived. You carry a thirty eight?

Dismukes doesn't answer. The Detective slams the desk.

DETECTIVE #1
A REVOLVER!

DISMUKES
I do have a .38.

DETECTIVE #1
Shoot anyone?

DISMUKES
No.

DETECTIVE #2
Strike anyone?

DISMUKES
Not in the way you mean.

DETECTIVE #2
What do I mean?

DISMUKES
Look fellas, sometimes when there's a black guy in a position of authority - other blacks might single him out. Because I'm not supposed to be able to tell them what to do.

DETECTIVE #2
We do these conversations in stages. Stage one, witnesses. Stage Two, suspects.

DETECTIVE #1
What stage are we in?

Dismukes shrugs.

DETECTIVE #2
You don't know what stage we're in?

DETECTIVE #1
No. Specify for him.

DETECTIVE #2
Oh. We're in Stage 2.
(to Dismukes)
You're a suspect.

DISMUKES
It wasn't me. The police -

DETECTIVE #2
Here we go -

DISMUKES
- The police shot those kids.

DETECTIVE #1
How the hell would you know that? You weren't inside the building until after the shooting stopped, or so you just said. So are you lying now? Or were you lying a minute ago?

INT. DETROIT POLICE STATION - LINE UP ROOM

Dismukes stands in a line of other black suspects. Each man holds a number. A loudspeaker in the corner of the room squawks and hisses. Finally it becomes clear -

LOUDSPEAKER
Number four, please step forward.

Dismukes is holding the 4. He steps forward.

BEHIND THE GLASS:

Julie stares at Dismukes.

INT. DETROIT CITY JAIL CELL - LATER

Bars close on Dismukes as he's locked in a cell.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - AFTERNOON

Larry lies in bed, covered in bandages. The Dramatics are here visiting.

MORRIS
Hey Larry, wake up, brother.

Larry's eyes flutter. He looks at them. Can't find words.

JIMMY
You alright, man. It's us.

Morris nods to Fred's brother, EDDIE.

EDDIE TEMPLE
Do you know where Fred is?

Slowly, Larry shakes his head, NO.

EDDIE TEMPLE (CONT'D)
The police are saying Fred is dead. But I can't find nobody to tell me what's going on.

LARRY
What's going on?

DARRYL
You tell us -

Nobody knows what else to say. The room falls silent. Larry holds back tears.

LARRY
The police.

Everybody knows what that means.

Morris closes his eyes, starts humming a spiritual -

MORRIS
(humming and singing)
Hold on
Hold on

Larry collects himself.

LARRY
You gonna sing - sing one of my songs.

CUT TO:

INT. DETROIT CITY MORGUE - HALLWAY - LATER

Aubrey Sr. is sitting on a bench, talking to DOCTOR NANCY BREYER. His mother is on another bench, giving him some space.

In front of them is the DOOR to the MORGUE.

Aubrey Sr. clings to this conversation. If he could sit here and talk to this lady forever, he might never have to go through that door.

AUBREY SR.
Oh, he's a character, you know. He always wants life up to par. I tell him "you've got to give something to get something"... But he wants to go a long ways.

DOCTOR NANCY BREYER
Sounds like a lovely young man.

AUBREY SR.
Do you have children?

DOCTOR NANCY BREYER
Oh yes, I have three boys. The oldest is twelve, then nine, and seven.

AUBREY SR.
So you know how youngsters are.

DOCTOR NANCY BREYER
Oh, boy. The way they communicate - grunts and groans. My little cave men!

AUBREY SR.
Boys especially. They don't know if they want to be slick, you know.

DOCTOR NANCY BREYER
That's right. They're still finding out who they are in this life, and we have to allow for that.

AUBREY SR.
Uh-huh.

DOCTOR NANCY BREYER
Oh, yes.

AUBREY SR.
Hmm.

DOCTOR NANCY BREYER
Yes. Well. I can see that you want to go back there.

AUBREY SR.
Sure.

She stands. He doesn't.

She holds the door open for the morgue.

He can't get off the bench.

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. DETROIT WHITE SUBURB - KRAUSS HOUSE

Little house. Lawn. White fence. A facsimile of the American dream. Krauss pulls up in his car, goes inside, takes off his jacket, pops a dinner in the oven, pours a scotch and settles down in front of the TV.

TV: newscaster saying something about the aftermath of the riots.

INT. POLICE STATION - AFTERNOON

TITLE OVER: **5 DAYS AFTER THE KILLING**

Krauss, Flynn, and Demens are sitting on a bench in the Police Station outside the Homicide Detective's Office.

KRAUSS
Just remember what I told you and this will blow over. We did nothing wrong.

DEMENS
I feel like I gotta say something.

KRAUSS
You made a -

Two cops are walking down the hall. He lowers his voice.

KRAUSS (CONT'D)
(whisper)
Something that took one minute shouldn't define your entire life. You made a mistake. Say what you need to say and move on.

DEMENS
Alright. Alright.

Krauss turns to Flynn.

FLYNN
You don't need to lecture me. I know what to do.

Krauss leans back, satisfied. A HOMICIDE DETECTIVE pokes his head out of the door, points his finger at Demens -

HOMICIDE DETECTIVE
You first, knucklehead.

Demens gets up and goes into the room. Off the slamming door -

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - LATER

Krauss and Flynn on the bench. Some time has passed. Flynn is called in. COPS walk up and down the hallway. It's obvious from the way they ignore Krauss, or whisper about him as they walk, that he's become a pariah.

INT. POLICE STATION - LATER

The door opens from the Detective's Office. Flynn and Demens join Krauss on the bench.

HOMICIDE DETECTIVE
(to Krauss)
I'll be with you in a few minutes.

Demens stares straight ahead.

DEMENS
Some things were said in there.

KRAUSS
Such as?

DEMENS
...

KRAUSS
You motherfucker. You're dead.

Flynn shrugs.

KRAUSS (CONT'D)
You too?

FLYNN
We're all going down.

Krauss gets up and walks down the hall.

INT. POLICE STATION - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

We follow him as he walks to the exit -

EXT. POLICE STATION - CONTINUOUS

He gets in the car and starts the motor just as there's a KNOCK on his window. It's the Homicide Detective.

KRAUSS
I got nothin' to say without my union lawyer.

HOMICIDE DETECTIVE
You kidding me, you racist fuck? Get out of this car before I break your neck.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - HOMICIDE OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Krauss sits across the table from two Homicide Detectives. He's trying to run out the clock.

KRAUSS
I couldn't say for sure who went inside the building first, whether it was National Guard or State Police. There were ... let me see ... five or six state police present -

HOMICIDE DETECTIVE 1
We have complete statements from your partners. We know you shot those kids - so just get to that part.

KRAUSS
No, I don't recall doing that. Where was I? So it was a multi-agency effort to secure the scene.
(MORE)

KRAUSS (CONT'D)
We had a number of National Guard and State police -

HOMICIDE DETECTIVE 2
You're cruising for a bruising.

HOMICIDE DETECTIVE 1
Bang his head against the table. Might help.

KRAUSS
Sorry, guys. I'm trying to be thorough. I know this is important. You don't want to know the number of State Police on the scene?

HOMICIDE DETECTIVE 1
I can't tell if you're stupid or smart.

The door opens and DEFENSE ATTORNEY AUERBACH walks in.

AUERBACH
(to Krauss)
Don't say another word.
(to Detectives)
What's the point? Coercive testimony will be tossed.

INT./EXT. WARRANT OFFICER ROBERTS HOUSE - MORNING

Roberts (in his bathrobe) opens the front door and grabs the newspaper. He flips it open - bullets tumble out.

C.U. HEADLINE: ALGIERS MOTEL DEATHS

Roberts looks up and down his street.

CUT TO:

INT. EXT LARRY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The Dramatics are gathered outside of Larry's place, knocking on the door, calling for him to wake up, come outside.

He appears at last, groggy with sleep.

LARRY
What's so important?

MORRIS
Record company called! They want to hear our music in the studio.

LARRY
They called you?

DARRYL
They called me. They said they tried you. You never called back.

LARRY
If they called, I'm pretty sure I would remember.

DARRYL
Dig, like we got the call, it's alright. We need to move before they might change their minds. Let's go.

LARRY
Oh, you Mister Show Business now? This isn't professional! Call at business hour - not three in the morning!!

DARRYL
It's a record company, they don't keep bankers' hours. Come on.

Larry closes the door on them.

INT. LARRY'S HOUSE

He leans against the door, gathering himself all over again. Okay. Here we go.

INT. RECORD COMPANY HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

HALLWAY:

The Dramatics wait their turn to audition, standing around in the outer hallway, from which they can see a little bit inside the glass studio where -

INT. STUDIO

Seated around the studio are a group of jazz session musicians, studio pros who've seen it all, done it all.

They are ushered into the room.

The Dramatics gawk at the grizzled pros and the assembly of shiny equipment.

Impatient behind the glass partition, HARRY, the hard-driving impresario, clicks the mic -

HARRY
(over mic)
You guys had better be good because I'm broke.

Larry hesitates - or did he freeze up - Morris steps up to the mic.

MORRIS
Yes, sir. One, two, One, two three four - and -

The singing starts.

Very quickly realize that Larry is only lip-syncing.

The song sounds thin.

Morris shoots him a look, raised eyebrows.

MORRIS (CONT'D)
(to the boss)
Excuse me, Sir. Can we have a minute?

EXT. STREET - LATER

Larry paces. Morris goes right at him.

MORRIS
What's in your head? You were lip-syncing.

LARRY
How am I supposed to sing with what happened to Fred?

MORRIS
You just do it.

LARRY
Sing 'Dancing in the Streets' when my boy is lying dead. Come on.

MORRIS
A song is not words on a page. That's not music. Music is what you put into it. You can make that whatever you want.

LARRY
I'm not singing for Motown so white motherfuckers can dance.

MORRIS
They ain't dancing for free.

Larry walks away -

MORRIS (CONT'D)
(to his back)
Since when do you care if white people dance?

Then Morris realizes how much his friend has changed.

CUT TO:

EXT. DETROIT BLACK NEIGHBORHOOD - MONTHS LATER

A MAILMAN stands in front of a house looking for a mailbox.

A YOUNG BLACK GIRL stares at him from a stoop.

YOUNG BLACK GIRL
Who you got mail for?

MAILMAN
Cleveland Larry Reed.

The YOUNG BLACK GIRL walks down, sticks out her hand.

YOUNG BLACK GIRL
I'll take it to him.

He hands her the envelope. We follow her back inside as she passes through the entryway -

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

- Past a living room crowded with RELATIVES -

- Through the living room - and up the stairs -

YOUNG BLACK GIRL
(shouting upstairs)
LARRY! You got a letter!
(she looks at it)
From the government!

An OLDER WOMAN appears at the top of the stairs. Takes the letter from the YOUNG BLACK GIRL.

OLDER WOMAN
I'll give it to him.

We follow the OLD WOMAN now, staying with the letter, as she walks down the hall, where we see various BOARDERS in the rooms.

She gets to the end of the hall - KNOCKS ON THE DOOR - gets no answer.

She opens it.

Sees Larry lying on the bed. He gives no answer. She kneels down next to him and hands him the letter.

He opens it.

Something official from a court, and a BUS TICKET.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUS STATION - AFTERNOON

Larry stands in line for a bus upstate.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. BUS

LARRY is on the BUS, staring out the window.

He's never seen so much greenery in his life.

Everyone else on the bus is white.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUS - MUCH LATER

The bus pulls up in a small SUBURBAN TOWN and -

LARRY STEPS OUT, looks around, lost.

Unfriendly stares from workers nearby.

LARRY
Excuse me. Which way is the courthouse?

The WORKERS snort. *Naturally, he's looking for the courthouse.*

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTHOUSE - LATER

Larry climbs the front steps.

INT. RECORDERS COURT, COURTHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Larry enters and sees way at the front, past the rows and rows of white people, a small pocket of black men and women.

CUT TO:

INT. RECORDERS COURT - LATER

AUERBACH, the confident defense attorney, talks very fast to Roberts, the member of the National Guard, who is now on the witness stand.

AUERBACH
You saw the flash before you heard the gun shot. Is that your testimony?

Larry watches from the audience.

ROBERTS
I can't say for sure -

His questions come raining down before Roberts is finished.

AUERBACH
Well which is it? Which came first. Did you see the flash?

ROBERTS
It is pretty confusing -

AUERBACH
- Well, now, you said before that you might be confused, that you didn't know what point of time these things happened. Are you confused?

ROBERTS
Yes, sir.

AUERBACH
Thank you.

ROBERTS
I can't -

AUERBACH
- Thank you -

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - LATER

Everyone is in the same position, but a new witness is on the stand, Greene.

AUERBACH
Being a military man you would be able to distinguish between the uniforms of a National Guardsman with that of a Detroit Police officer, is that correct?

GREENE
I suppose.

AUERBACH
And so you say that the man that took the victim, Mr. Pollard, into the room, that he was a National Guardsman and so I presume that you know this because he was wearing a uniform of the National Guard.

GREENE
Yes, I saw a guy in uniform take him back there.

AUERBACH
Did you see anybody else go back into that room?

GREENE
No.

AUERBACH
Would you have been able to see anybody else go back into that room, at that time, wasn't your head turned back by the police officers who were still standing there with you?

GREENE
Yes.

AUERBACH
Yes what? How could you see if anybody else was taken back into that room if your head was turned subsequent to the man you say was in a uniform.

GREENE
I couldn't see after that.

AUERBACH
So for all you know, any number of people could have gone into that room. Or left for that matter.
(MORE)

AUERBACH (CONT'D)
And in fact, you can't say for certain who was in the room at all. The man in the uniform could have walked directly out, couldn't he have?

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - MORNING

AUERBACH
And so in the lineup when you were asked to identify the officers who beat you, who did you identify? Do you see him here in court today?

KAREN
Him and him.
(pointing to Krauss and Flynn)

AUERBACH
But you have just identified both of the defendants. Why did you not identify both of them at the time in the lineup? Why did you only identify one of them if they both took part in beating you? Which recollection for the record, would you say is the correct recollection?

KAREN
I just said...I couldn't tell at first. When I went down to the police station, I was very nervous.

AUERBACH
So now you are calm and you will not be changing your story, again , then? This is it? This is the one you want us to work with?

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - LATER

AUERBACH
Isn't it a fact, Mr. Reed, that your head was against the wall for most of the evening.

LARRY
My hands were on the wall, that's a fact.

AUERBACH
I asked about your head.

LARRY
My head is attached to my neck. It moves -
(he moves his head to demonstrate)
This way and that.

AUERBACH
And yet it cannot turn completely around to see what's behind you, or do have a special skill the courtroom should know about?

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM LATER - MORNING

LEE
He put me down on the floor and then he fired a shot and told me to keep my mouth shut and lay still or the next one would be for real.

AUERBACH
And what did you do?

LEE
I lay still.

AUERBACH
And were you mistreated, in any way, after that.

LEE
Mistreated?

AUERBACH
Have you ever been arrested, sir.

LEE
Sure.

AUERBACH
Ever spent a night in jail.

LEE
Sure.

AUERBACH
How many times have you been arrested and how many nights and days have
(MORE)

AUERBACH (CONT'D)
You spent in prison for crimes you committed or alleged to have committed? Criminal acts, that is.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - LATER

AUERBACH
Thank you.
(to the judge)
Next witness, your honor.

CUT TO:

INT. RECORDER'S COURT - LATER

The JUDGE, DEFENSE TEAM and PROSECUTION are considering the merits of omitting the police confessions. Both lawyers stand before the JUDGE.

All the following is said very quickly, with an almost rote mechanical quality that underscores the mind-numbing nature of a legal loop hole:

LANG
If your honor pleases. These were police officers sophisticated in the knowledge of their constitutional rights, having been trained in this.

AUERBACH
I think what is crystal clear here, Your Honor, is that these men were under an intolerable situation. They were under this duress, which we say is inherent, and for that reason they had no other choice.

LANG
Alright. All they had to do was keep quiet. If they kept quiet, they wouldn't be here today. But they didn't. They made a statement, and that statement should be admissible.

AUERBACH
Not if it was made under duress, Your Honor. Not if the taking of the statement violates constitutional rights.

JUDGE
These policemen were owed an obligation, the same obligation owed to any citizen, advising them that they had a right to remain silent, they had a right to consult, and anything that they said could be used against them in a court of law. That would be so if there was any other person, any regular, ordinary citizen. The police would have to advise an ordinary citizen that whatever you say can be used against you. I don't think these two defendants, because they are police officers, have any right to expect anything more from us, but they have a right under the Constitution not to settle for anything less. I therefore rule the statement inadmissible.

In the audience, Conyers can't believe it went this way.

INT. COURTHOUSE HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The hallway is massively overcrowded, defendants huddling in one corner, surrounded by UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICERS. Victims in the other corner. They start filing back inside the courtroom.

EXT. COURTHOUSE ALLEY - MOMENTS LATER

All the defendants - Krauss, Flynn, Demens and Dismukes are taking a quick break away from the attorneys, gathered around an ashtray, smoking.

KRAUSS
(to Dismukes)
Isn't this just a load of bullshit?

DISMUKES
You know as well as I do those kids shouldn't have been killed like that.

KRAUSS
Yeah, shame. They resisted. They should have complied with a lawful order to relinquish their weapons.

Krauss slaps him on the shoulder

KRAUSS (CONT'D)
You're a solid guy.

DISMUKES
Excuse me.

Dismukes walks away from the group and we follow him into the parking lot -

EXT. PARKING LOT

Dismukes walks stiffly to a private spot, trying to gather himself and then his body can't keep the contradictions buried any longer and he finds himself doubled over puking -

Vomit stains the concrete -

He wipes his mouth and breathes.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Aubrey's Grandmother, Ma, is outside with a group of REPORTERS. She's enraged -

MA
This wouldn't have happened if they found **black** girls in a hotel with white men, no sir. No way would they do this to white men. That's the truth and I don't care who knows it. They can't shut me up, no sir.

REPORTER
Thank you, M'am. How does it feel to have lost your Grandson?

Maw shoots him a look. Can this guy be serious?

MA
(sincerely)
It's a terrible pain. It never goes away.

John Conyer pulls her away from the press vultures.

CONYERS
(to the reporter)
Why don't you conduct yourself with a little empathy. We're here today to witness the Justice System at work - and we demand that police criminality be treated the same as any other kind of criminality.

REPORTER
Some people would say it's wrong to judge police for doing their jobs.

CONYERS
Nice try. You have my comment.
(spelling it out)
Police criminality needs to be treated the same as any other kind of criminality.

INT. COURTHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

There's a moment where Larry almost crosses paths with Krauss, as they're both heading into the courtroom at the same time. Krauss lets him go first.

INT. COURTROOM - LATER

Everyone is seated. Waiting for the jury to come back.

The JURY MEMBERS shuffle back into the room.

We pan across their faces - all white.

JUDGE
(to JURY)
Has the jury reached a decision in this matter, with regards to the charges of murder in the first degree and assault?

HEAD JUROR
We have, your honor.

JUDGE
Well, would you like to tell the court what it is?

VERY TIGHT ON THE HEAD JUROR'S FACE:

HEAD JUROR
On the assault, not guilty. As to the murder charges ... not guilty.

CUT TO:

BRIGHT NEON LIGHTS OF THE FOX THEATER MARQUEE:

THE DRAMATICS!

EXT. FOX THEATER

A crowd buys tickets to the show.

INT. FOX THEATER

The DRAMATICS are on stage in full performance mode.

Twist, turn and smile.

MORRIS
(signing)
I'm as real as real can be,
What you see is what you get

We clock the boys, one by one. Someone is missing.

CROWD:

Everyone enjoying the show, except for Larry.

Never thought he'd be in the audience.

STAGE:

The boys are dazzling.

EXT. FOX THEATER - LATER

The Dramatics shuffle out of the stage door, passing Larry who is leaning on the side of the building. They almost don't notice him until Larry grabs Morris' elbow. The band stops - unsure of what to say to Larry.

MORRIS
(to the rest of the group)
Ya'll go on ahead.

Inside Larry, the betrayal boils over -

LARRY
This is my group.

MORRIS
We got a contract. Nothing you can say.

LARRY
Come on, you leave me like this?

MORRIS
Can I try to talk to you for a minute?

LARRY
...

MORRIS
If something is good, it's good no matter what. Even if you kill it. See what I'm saying?

Larry doesn't.

MORRIS (CONT'D)
Fred will always be good. They can't take that.

LARRY
I hear you.

MORRIS
Okay then. We gotta snatch this opportunity.

LARRY
Not like this.

MORRIS
Man, Motown is a black-owned company.

LARRY
You know what I mean. Who listens to this *music*. It's not easy for me.

MORRIS
We all a long way from easy.

What more is there to say.

They clasp hands, hug.

Genuine warmth.

LARRY
You do what you need. I'm gonna lay low.

Morris turns back to join the waiting band.

CUT TO:

EXT. DETROIT - WINTER - MONTHS LATER

A heavy snowfall blankets the wrecked city.

Larry trudges through the icy muck, jacket wrapped against the cold.

A deflated man.

INT. LARRY'S APARTMENT - LATER

It is damn small. Stove going - water on the boil - but not much to eat. Larry opens the cupboard and shakes a box of rice. Empty.

He goes for some beans.

EXT. DETROIT STREET - SOUTHERN BAPTIST CHURCH

Larry stands outside the Church, thinking.

INT. CHURCH - MOMENT LATER

He walks around and finds the Pastor in the back, writing a sermon.

LARRY
Excuse me, brother.

The Pastor looks up.

LARRY (CONT'D)
I submitted an application for the Church Choir Director and never heard back. Larry Reed?

PASTOR
I remember. From the Dramatics, right? As I recall you were overqualified as a professional musician. We're just a neighborhood church.

LARRY
I am overqualified. So?

PASTOR
Well, why don't you go try some of the clubs downtown, I'm sure they'd be happy to have you and I can guarantee you the pay will be better.

LARRY
Lotta police in those you clubs, you know, it's dangerous. Can you help? I need a job.

PASTOR
I think I understand.

EXT. CHURCH - LATER

Larry stands outside the Church, then heads home.

We follow him as he walks, turns a corner, and passes by the Fox Theater.

He doesn't look up at the marquee.

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH - CHOIR PRACTICE ROOM

Larry Reed at a piano in a modest practice room. He is surrounded by an eclectic mix of BLACK LADIES on folding chairs, who are fanning themselves, waiting for him to play.

Larry is very nervous.

He hasn't approached a piano since the Algiers murders.

LARRY
Alright, I'm not gonna lie. It's been awhile.

He wipes his sweaty hands.

LARRY (CONT'D)
Well, let's see what you got. Ready? And ah- One, two three -

He strikes the keys -

CUT TO:

BLACK

Then back to Larry.

He plays with real grace and fluidity. A natural.

The CHOIR begins.

Larry joins in.

His voice, which we haven't heard in forever, is loud and clear.

And getting stronger.

As he sings, these TITLES:

AT LEAST 41 CIVILIANS AND ONE POLICE OFFICER WERE KILLED DURING THE DETROIT UNREST.

NO LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS WERE EVER CONVICTED FOR THE KILLINGS.

YEARS LATER, A CIVIL COURT RULED AGAINST ONE OF THE OFFICERS PRESENT AT THE ALGIERS HOTEL MURDERS.

HE WAS ORDERED TO PAY A FINE OF $5,000.

THE DRAMATICS BROKE OUT IN THE 1970s, WITH SEVERAL HIT SINGLES ON THE MOTOWN CHARTS.

THE GROUP CONTINUES TO PERFORM TO THIS DAY.

CLEVELAND LARRY REED STILL LIVES IN DETROIT.